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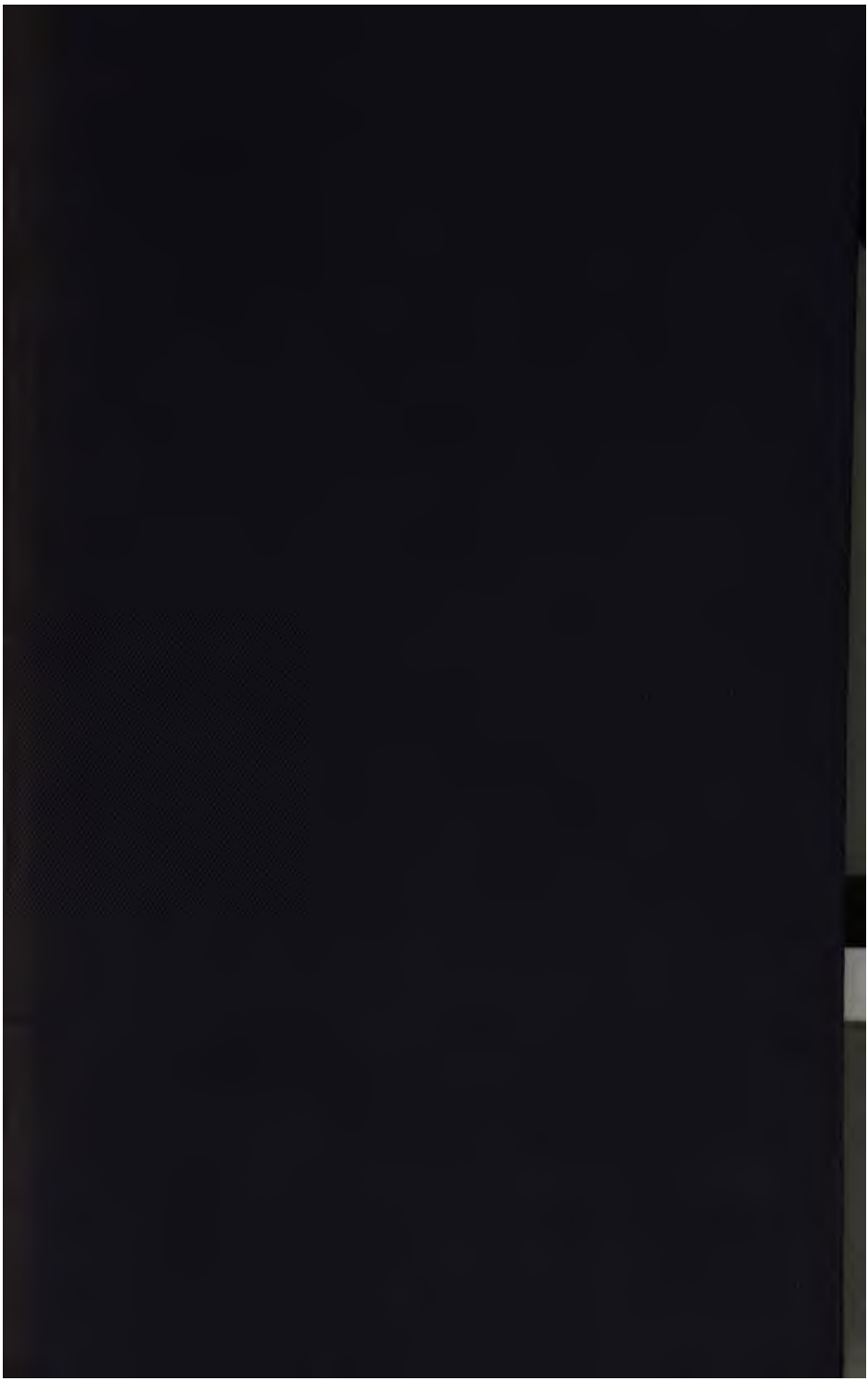

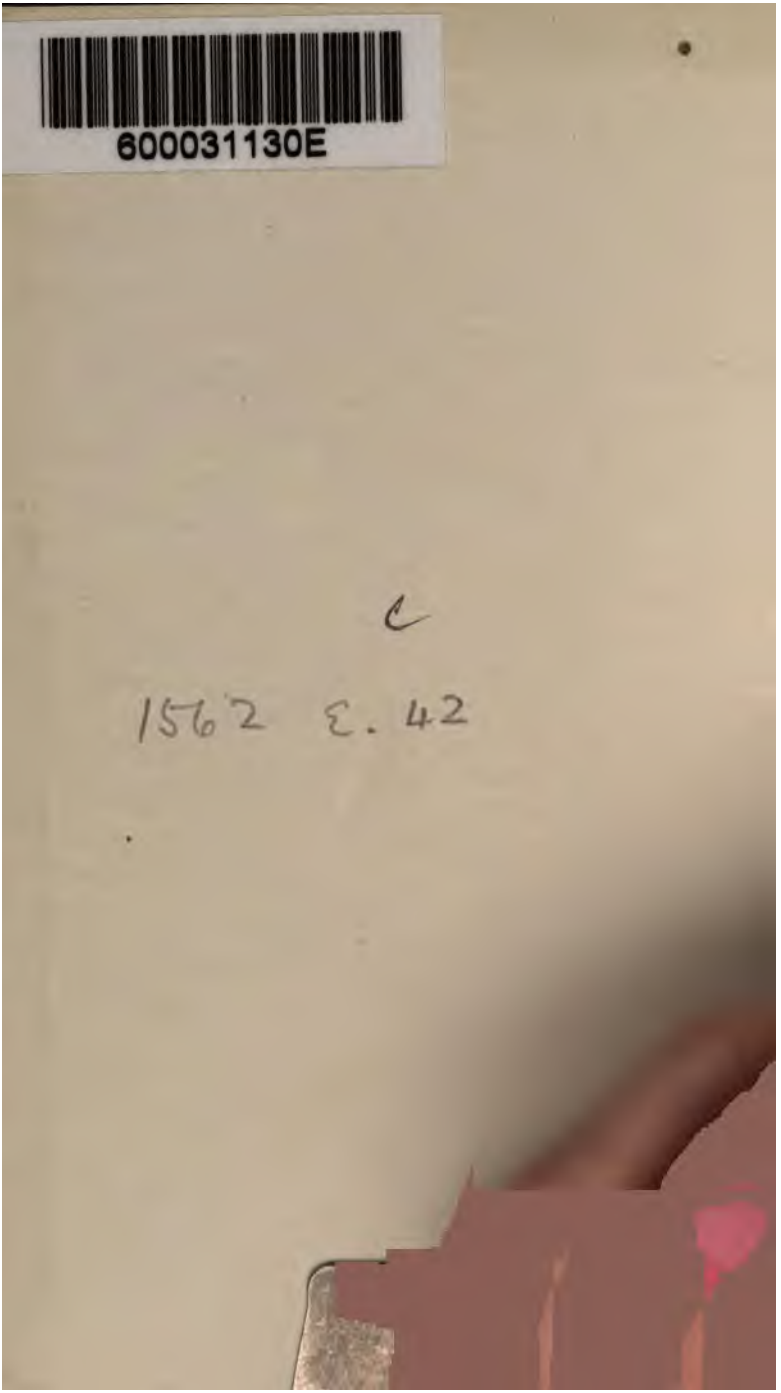
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NARRATIVES

OF

TWO FAMILIES EXPOSED TO THE

GREAT PLAGUE OF LONDON,

A. D. 1665;

WITH

CONVERSATIONS

ON

RELIGIOUS PREPARATION FOR PESTILENCE.

REPUBLISHED, WITH NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS,

BY JOHN SCOTT, M. A.

VICAR OF NORTH FERRIBY, AND MINISTER OF S. MARY'S, HULL, ETC.

MISCUIT UTILE DULCI.

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PREFACE,

BY THE EDITOR.

SOME four or five and thirty years ago my attention was attracted, at a book-stall in London, to a small duodecimo volume, neatly bound, and lettered on the back, "PLAGUE FOR SOUL AND BODY." The title page furnished the *rectification* of this grotesque labelling: "Preparations for the Plague, (Preparations) as well for Soul as Body." —The work is anonymous—printed at London "for E. Matthews at the Bible, and J. Batley at the Dove, in Paternoster Row," in 1722. This was a time when the plague, which had com-

menced at Marseilles in 1720, was still raging in France, and was making such progress towards our own shores as induced the government of that day to adopt measures, similar to those which are now employed to prevent, by the blessing of God upon them, the introduction or diffusion of another fatal disease amongst us, which is calculated to have carried off, in various parts of the world, as many as fifty millions of our fellow creatures within the last fourteen years!—In particular we may observe, that at the period referred to those *prayers* were first introduced, which are now by public authority again used amongst us.[1]

I purchased for sixpence the little volume I have described: and, on perusing it, found it to contain, in the form of a history of a family shut up in London at the time, an Account of the great plague of A. D. 1665, which is highly

[1] Christian Observer, Nov. 1831.

interesting and affecting, and at the same time free from those minute and revolting descriptions, which sometimes make us turn away from such narratives with horror. This is followed by a series of Conversations between the members of another family, exposed to the same awful visitation, on the spiritual preparation requisite to fortify the mind in the prospect of such a calamity, and to secure our meeting it *unharmed*, if it should really come.

Several friends, to whom I lent the volume, read it with no less gratification than it had afforded me: and, during the many years that I have now had a family about me, it has been so much a favourite among them, that I found I could seldom afford a greater treat to my children, than by allowing them the use of "the Plague Book."

The *Conversations* I conceive to be of a highly useful character, as well as entertaining. Very forcibly indeed do

they seem to me to press upon the conscience the necessity of living prepared for death and eternity; strikingly illustrating the happy effects of so doing on the one hand, and, on the other, the unhappy consequences which follow from the neglect of it, whenever danger arises.

On these grounds, and in consideration of the scarcity of the book—of which I have never seen, or, properly speaking, heard of another copy—[1] I have often entertained the thoughts of reprinting it, at least in an abridged form. This, however, has hitherto remained among my unexecuted purposes. I hope the work may have been reserved

[1] In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1825 appeared, in the numbers for April and July, some extracts from the narrative portion of both parts of the work—communicated by Mr. W. Hamilton Reid. That gentleman, however, did not point out the source from which he had derived them; but only observed that they were "not in any popular author that he had read," but were "among the many traits of former times collected during his limited researches into the antiquities of the great city." From the Gentleman's, the first, at least, of the extracts was transferred to the pages of the Youth's Magazine—an evidence that it was esteemed interesting.

for a time when it may be more seasonable, and therefore more useful. To young persons, in particular, I dare promise that it will afford much interesting information; while I hope it may at the same time, by the blessing of God, make very salutary impressions on their hearts.

In republishing, however, I have not thought it necessary to give the whole of the volume. It contains discussion on the contagious nature of the plague, (which was then disputed, as that of the Cholera is now,) and many things on medical and economical provision against it, which do not concern general readers, or perhaps readers of any class in the present day. All these therefore I have dropped; and other parts I have abridged: thus reducing the former division of the work by more than one half. The latter division admitted of less retrenchment: though this also is reduced in size.

As no known author was answerable

for the work, I have felt myself at full liberty to correct the language, where this appeared to be necessary. It is written in an easy, natural, and lively style, but with considerable grammatical inaccuracy, especially in the pointing and division of the sentences. This I have endeavoured to remove: but I have in no case knowingly altered the sentiment.

The period at which the volume was published was an unfavourable one, as respects pure Christian light and knowledge. The extravagances of the times preceding the restoration, and the profane and licentious reign of Charles II. which followed, had conspired to bring devout religion, and evangelical truth, into disrepute and oblivion: from which they had not yet emerged again. Hence it might be supposed that the religious principles of the work would need some correction. To a certain degree, though much short of what would, perhaps,

have been expected, this is the case; and I have attempted to supply that correction in notes, in a manner which I hope may assist those whose views are not yet fully formed. But the fact is, that the writer's principles are essentially sound and good. He admits some expressions which may be a little revolting to our ears, and he defers too long the distinct enunciation of the Gospel; but it is at length developed, and applied in a very delightful manner. The temper and state of mind which are described as being produced, and as alone constituting the right preparation for meeting the pestilence in peace, or, in other words, for death and eternity, are, in my judgment, thoroughly Christian, and formed upon Christian principles. With the slight corrections, therefore, which are here furnished, I can confidently commit the book to the reader—commending both him and it to the blessing of Almighty God.

I subjoin one paragraph from the Author's preface. After adverting to the "proclamations, orders of council, directions for ships performing quarantine," at the period in which he wrote; and even to Parliament's "putting the nation to the expense of £25,000, to burn two Turkish ships which were suspected to have goods on board that might contain the infection," he proceeds: "With respect to our *religious* preparations .... I have seen, I may say, nothing at all offered to the public. On the contrary, the whole world is intent and busy on their ordinary occasions: men pursue the usual course of the world; they push their interest, their gain, or their pleasures and gaiety, with the same gust, or rather more than ever; nay, the cry of the nation's follies grows louder and louder every day: and so far we are from considering that, *when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants should learn right-*

eousness; that we are rather learning to be more superlatively wicked than ever. Witness the increase of plays and play-houses, one being now building, though so many are already in use: witness the public trading and stock-jobbing on the Sabbath-day: witness the raging avarice of the times, by which the civil interest of the nation is ruined and destroyed: witness, also, our feuds, divisions, and heats, as well in religious differences, as those that are political, which are all carried up to dreadful extremes."

Alas! that in successive ages, and under the most threatening aspects of Providence, the ministers of religion, and seriously-minded persons in general, should have to reiterate such complaints. Alas! that so much of the description before us (especially the latter part of it,) should be so applicable to our own times. Yet let us not despond. The perusal of a series of faithful sermons preached on Fast-days and other public

occasions thirty or forty years ago, has left a cheering impression on my mind. Evils have been checked against which the servants of God had then to cry out. Good has been ascertained and confirmed of which they could then speak but doubtfully. Institutions exist, and flourish, and fill the earth with their fruits, of which it scarcely entered into their hearts to conceive. Let us therefore "thank God, and take courage." Let us be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, *knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.*"

J. S.

HULL, DECEMBER 12, 1831.

AN ACCOUNT,

ETC.

THE work which I propose in part to republish treats, first, of preparations *against* the Pestilence—for warding it off; and, secondly, of preparations *for* the Pestilence —for meeting the visitation in a proper manner, should it please God, after all our precautions, to send it upon us. The former are divided into Public, or measures to be adopted by the government and police; and Domestic, or such as pertain to individuals and families. Respecting the Public Measures we shall only remark, that the author discusses at some length what he denominates "the French method," of surrounding infected towns with troops,

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shutting up sick and well together in them, and endeavouring to preclude the escape of any persons from them, lest they should carry the infection to other parts. This he pronounces inhuman in the extreme,[1] and at the same time maintains that it has seldom or never been found effectual. He would rather, under proper tests and precautions, endeavour to withdraw the sound part of the inhabitants, and leave behind only the sick, with proper attendants, and such as chose to remain and run all hazards. Of the good effects of such a proceeding, *as far as it was carried*, he contends that London itself afforded an example at the time of the great plague. Within the bills of mortality indeed 68,596 persons died

[1] He subsequently mentions two children, thirteen and fourteen years of age, being deliberately shot to death, contrary to the entreaties of the very people among whom they had gone, because "in mere duty to their distressed father, who lay sick in the mountains, they had found means to pass the lines of Dauphinè in the night, to carry him relief." Also five soldiers, who had the guard of the lines, in like manner shot "for having pursued two sheep within the lines, to kill them, lest they should get back and infect the country."

of the plague in the year 1665; but this was out of a customary population estimated at 600,000: whereas in Marseilles, about the time he wrote, nearly the same number had died out of 90,000![1] And here he introduces the following description of the state of London at the time referred to. "The removing of the inhabitants was at that time very great, if we may believe the report of those who were then living; for, first, the whole court removed to Oxford: there was neither parliament nor term held

[1] It is afterwards observed that, though the number of persons that died is accounted to the whole year, from 20 December, 1664, to 20 December, 1665, yet the great mass died within less than four months, 81,559 being reported as having died of all diseases from 18 July to 14 November: and in the three weeks from 29 August to 19 September. 24,239. Moreover the bills of mortality neither did nor could, as circumstances then were, give account of all who died. "Numbers perished in the fields and high-ways, wandering in their distress and desperation from the town, destitute, and not knowing whither to go, and the villages about refusing to admit them, or give them any shelter." "Thousands also perished in those towns adjacent to London, which are not included in the bills of mortality." Whence the whole number is spoken of, in round and probably not much overrated terms, as amounting to 100,000.

in London; so that all the nobility, and gentry, and lawyers vanished as it were at once, and there was scarce a living creature to be seen about the court. Whitehall was uninhabited, and the park shut up; the passages every where stopped. Nothing was to be seen at the great houses of the nobility in Westminster and parts adjacent, but a servant or two to look after the house; or perhaps nobody within, only a watchman or two at the gate night and day to prevent robbing the house. And, as the plague began in the parish of St. Giles in the Fields, the people at that end of the town fled first; so that the streets looked desolate, and the grass grew at the doors and upon the steps of the houses; and the streets were in several places barricaded at both ends, the inhabitants being entirely removed and gone. In the city, that is to say within the walls, as I have been told, above seven thousand houses were quite empty, and the doors locked up; and in most of the rest the families were thin, half or more of them

gone. And this was, without doubt, the reason why the number that died in the city was much smaller in proportion than in any other part, there dying more by 4551 in the two parishes of Stepney and White-chapel than in the whole ninety-seven parishes within the walls. For in these the people, being generally wealthy, provided for themselves and their families by an early flight into the country; whereas in the out-parts, the people living thicker and closer together, and being poor and wanting conveniences, and not able to flee for want of friends or money, or both, died in heaps, and strengthened the contagion by their numbers."

What an affecting and even awful picture is this! Well might it be said, "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow!" (Lam. i. 1.) What thankfulness do we owe to Almighty God, that we have never witnessed such scenes: and that our country, though subsequently threatened, has

not been revisited by them for the last one hundred and sixty years. What sympathy should we cherish for those who now suffer under similar inflictions: and, while we humbly confess our sinfulness and desert of God's judgments, how should we implore of Him " to turn away from us that grievous calamity, against which our only security is in His compassion."

Our author particularly urges, as a preparatory measure, before the plague visits or spreads in a place, the removal of *all* the children and young persons, under fourteen years of age, into country situations; remarking that " the distress of poor families in the time of the last plague, by reason of the great numbers of children that lay starving upon their hands, was inexpressible; and the numbers of them that perished in the streets, and in empty houses, some by want, some by neglect, some by the loss of their parents, and the rest by the distemper, added exceedingly to the height of the bills of mortality."

Proceeding to Domestic Preparations, he says, "The pestilence being a contagious distemper, it is one of the first principles that every family should abstain, as much as possible, from conversing with others. When a house is infected with the plague, we *shut it up.* This was done in the late plague of 1665 with great severity, none being suffered to go in or come out. Here the design is to keep the family from giving the plague to the people. When a household are sound and uninfected, they should *shut themselves up:* to keep others from giving the plague to them.—I know a family at this time living in Marseilles, who, having effectually locked themselves up within their own house, and not conversed with the people of the town, never had the distemper at all."

"In order therefore to direct any particular family, who have substance to enable them to shut themselves up in so strict a manner as would be absolutely necessary," he proceeds "to describe a family

so secluded," the account being, he says, " partly historical and partly for direction."

We must here however premise, that it is not in order to second his recommendation of this or any other preservative *against* the plague that the present account is republished: but merely as an interesting and affecting narrative, presenting the best picture I have seen of the state of London at that awful period.

" The family I speak of," he says, " lived in the parish of St. Alban's, Wood Street. They consisted of the master of the family and his wife, being either of them between forty and fifty years of age, and in a pretty good state of health; of five children, three daughters and two sons; two maidservants, and an apprentice. The person was a wholesale grocer, and a considerable dealer. He had another apprentice, nearly out of his time; a porter and a boy employed in his business: but, seeing the desolation that was coming upon the city, he dismissed the boy, and made

him go away by the carrier to his friends in Staffordshire. To his eldest apprentice he gave the remainder of his time, and he went away also. As to the porter, he did not lodge in the house before: so there was no occasion for dismissing him. But, he being a poor man, and likely to fall into distress for want of his employ, his master engaged him to come every day and sit at his door, in a lodge which he made for him, from nine in the morning till six at night, as a watchman, and to receive any orders, go of necessary errands, carry letters to and from the posthouse, and the like. A wooden window covered with plates of tin, was made, up two pair of stairs, in which was fixed a pully with a rope to let down or draw up any thing that was wanted: and by this rope they often let down victuals and cordials, and what else they thought fit, to the poor man, the porter; and especially his wages constantly every week, or oftener, as he wanted them. But, whenever this window was to be

opened, a flash of gunpowder was made near it, and nothing suffered to come in from abroad till it was sufficiently fumigated and purified."

Such was the contrivance made for the only intercourse which was to be held with the world without, after the proper time for shutting up the family should have come. But our author enters largely into the particulars of the large store of provisions which the hero of his narrative thought it necessary previously to lay in, and which the nature of his business and his accommodations enabled him to procure and stow without too much attracting observation. He then proceeds as follows:

"With these preparations he began. He forbore shutting himself quite in for several months after the plague was begun, and even till there died above a thousand a week; because, though the infection was very terrible in the out-parishes, and especially in the west part of the town, that is to say in Holborn, St. Giles's, Fleet-

street, and the Strand, yet the city was very healthy: nor was the distemper felt within the walls, to any degree, till the latter end of June or the beginning of July: for in the second week of July, when there died, as by the weekly bills appeared, 1268 of all distempers, there yet died but 28 of the plague, in all the ninety-seven parishes within the walls, and but 16 in the whole body of buildings on the Surry side of the water. However the next week after it was doubled again; and, as he foresaw the infection overspreading the whole city and all the out-parts, like a dreadful torrent, as he had always said it would do, he began to put his resolutions more strictly in execution: for from the beginning of July he suffered none of his family to stir out without the walls of the city, nor in the city to any public place, market, exchange, church, or the like; and wrote to all his dealers and correspondents in the country not to write for any more goods, for that he could not send any thing out into the streets to

the carriers, or receive any thing in from them.

"The first of July he began to place his porter without the door. By the fourteenth of July the plague was increased in a dreadful manner in the out-parts, so that the bills amounted in that week to 1762 of all distempers, 1500 of which might be supposed to die of the plague, and the number still increasing; their own parish being the second that was infected in the city.

"Till this time he had taken fresh meat of a country woman, a higgler, who assuring him she brought it from Waltham-Abbey market, and opened it not till she came to his door, he had some satisfaction in it: but now he forbade her also, and allowed her coming no more. Now therefore he opened his magazine, and distributed bread or biscuit by weight to his family.

"Being thus entirely shut up, they scarcely knew how it fared with their neighbours; except that they heard the

knells continually sounding, and their porter gave them in weekly the bills of mortality, from which they might see what dreadful havoc the infection made in the town around them.

"After they had been shut up about three weeks, the porter gave them an account that the next house to them but two was infected; that three houses on the other side of the way were shut up; and that two servants out of another house on the same side of the way with them, but on the other side of their house, were sent away to the Pesthouse, beyond Old Street.

"It was a great satisfaction to them that the people in the next house to them, on one side, had all gone away into the country at the beginning of the visitation, and had left the house locked up; all the windows barred on the inside, and boarded up on the outside; and had given the charge of the house to the constable and watch. The next houses to them, on the other side, were all inhabited, and all visited; and at

length all shut up; and in one or more of them the whole families perished.

"By this time they heard a bell go ringing nightly along the streets, but knew not what it meant, it not being the sound of the ordinary bell-man: and, though they heard a voice with the bell, yet, as it did not go at first past their door, they could not distinguish what was said: and, since their porter did not sit at their door in the night as he did in the day, they could not inquire: but at length their porter informed them, that the numbers of people who died were so great in the out-parts, that it was impossible to bury them in form, or to provide coffins for them, nobody daring to come into the infected houses; and that therefore the Lord Mayor and Aldermen had ordered carts to go about, with a bell-man, to carry away the dead bodies: that this had been done in the parishes of Holborn, St. Sepulchre's, Cripplegate, and other large parishes above a fortnight; and that they began now to come

into the city, and in particular to the parish of St. Olave, Silver Street, which was very sickly; and that the carts were come thither the night before. This was frightful enough, Silver Street being the next parish to St. Alban's, only on the other side of the way. And the distemper raged violently in both; so that during that fortnight, which was the middle of August, there died near fourscore in those two small parishes; and the number was still increasing. The reason of this might be partly the joining of both these parishes to the Cripplegate side of the wall, and that the parish of Cripplegate was at that time dreadfully visited—the plague having come down that way from St. Giles's. The weight of the infection, during the latter end of August and the beginning of September, lay chiefly on that side the city; from whence it went on to Bishopgate, Shoreditch, White-chapel, and so to Stepney, taking the city with it; which was, as it were, carried down

with the stream; for the infection came first into the city at Cripplegate, and so spread in a few weeks quite over it.

"At this time, namely from the beginning to the end of August, or to the end of the first week in September, there died from 700 to 800, and almost 900 a week in Cripplegate parish only: and then it was that the carts were employed in that parish. It was indeed impossible to bury so many in the ordinary way; for there died four thousand people in five weeks in that parish: so that neither could coffins be made, or graves dug for them, or even churchyards be found to lay them in. Hence they were forced to obtain a grant of a piece of land from the city in Finsbury Fields, adjoining to the Artillery-ground, which was given them for a burying-ground; and remains such to this day. In this they dug vast pits, and threw the bodies into them nightly by cart-loads; always covering those with earth in the morning, who had been thrown in over night; and then next night throw-

ing in more bodies and more earth; and so on till the pit was filled. It was reported by the parish officers, that about 2,200 people were thrown into one of those pits.

"All this while the family continued in health, and the cheerful parent encouraged them to hope for preservation, whatever might happen without doors. But, when he received such bad news every day, and every night heard the dismal bell with the cart, and the voice following it in a mournful tone, 'Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!' it could not but make heavy impressions upon the minds of the master and mistress of the family; and they began to look upon one another with sad hearts, believing they were all but dead corpses; and that the visitation was so appointed by heaven, as that it would sweep away the whole body of the inhabitants, and that none would be left alive. In this distress he prudently ordered all his family to lodge on the lower floor, that is to say, up one pair of stairs, and as many

of them to lie single as possible; and had all the rooms above furnished with beds, to lay any of the family in that should be taken sick: so that if any fell sick they were to be immediately removed into some of those upper rooms, as to an infirmary, where they should be separated entirely from the rest of the family, and a nurse procured from abroad, to tend them—who should be drawn up by the pully to the wooden-shutter, so as not to come through the house at all, or converse with any in the family. In ordering this he appointed, that if he himself should be taken he would go immediately into the infirmary, and be attended by a nurse as above; and that none of his children should be suffered to go up the stairs, or come near him; and that if he should die his body should be let down by the pully also into the cart: and so of the whole house:—though his wife assured him, that if he was taken ill she would go up into the infirmary, and be shut up with him.

" We must suppose this gentleman to have much more prudence than religion, and much more thought for his body than for his soul, and so of the rest of his family, if he took no care all this while of his house, as to their worshipping God. Be pleased therefore to suppose, that, as he was a serious pious good man, so he carefully maintained the worshipping of God in his house ; that three times every day he called his family together in the most solemn manner to read to them, and pray to God with them ; always committing them with the utmost affection and humility to the divine protection, and casting himself and them into the arms of God's infinite mercy. Twice every week they kept a solemn day, giving themselves up to God by fasting and prayer. Every night indeed, looking on themselves as dead persons, they lay down with dismal apprehensions ; but were still comforted with finding themselves, morning after morning, preserved and in health.

" The careful father was up every day the first in the house, and went to every chamber door, servants' as well as children's, to ask them how they did; and when they answered, Very well, he left them with that short return, Give God thanks. This he did, that if any had been ill they might immediately have been removed up stairs, as is mentioned above.

" In the height of the calamity, and when (as before,) the good man was almost discouraged, he was still more straitened by the loss of his poor faithful porter. He missed him at the usual time when he was wont to lower down by the pully a mess of broth to him, or some other thing warm for his breakfast. Calling to him he received no answer: which made him afraid something was amiss with him. However he heard nothing of him all that day or the next; when the third day, calling again from within the door for him, he was answered by a strange voice, which told him in a melancholy tone that Abraham

the porter was dead. 'And who then are *you*?' said the master, to the person that spoke, 'I am his poor distressed widow, Sir,' said the answerer, 'come to tell you that your poor servant is gone.'—He was greatly afflicted at the loss of so useful and so faithful a person. However he composed himself, and said to her, 'Alas! poor woman, and what canst thou do then?' 'Oh! Sir,' said she, 'I am provided for: I have the distemper upon me: I shall not be long after him.' He was perfectly astonished and surprised at her last words, and, as he said, they made his heart cold within him. However, as he stood surrounded with the smoke of gunpowder, and within the wooden shutter, he did not immediately retire; but said to her again: 'If you are in such a condition, good woman, why did you come out?' 'I came,' said she, 'Sir, because I knew you would want poor Abraham to wait at your door, and I would let you know.' 'Well but,' said he, 'if he is dead I *must* want him; *you*

cannot help me, that are in such a condition as you speak of.' 'No, Sir,' said she, '*I* cannot help you; but I have brought you an honest poor man here, that will serve you as faithfully as poor Abraham did.' 'That is kindly done,' said the master: 'but how do I know what he is? and, as he comes with you that are sick, how do I know that he is not infected? I shall not dare to touch any thing that comes from him.' 'Oh! Sir,' said she, 'he is one of the *safe* men; for he has had the distemper, and is recovered: so he is out of danger, or else I would not have brought him to you: he will be very honest.' This was an encouragement to him, and he was very glad of the new man: but would not believe the story of his being recovered, till he brought the constable of the parish where he lived, and another person, to vouch for it.—While this was doing the poor woman, after some further questions, and some money thrown down to her for her relief, went away.

" It was observable now, that, whereas they had found it, as is said above, very melancholy at first to hear so many knells going continually, so on a sudden they now observed that there was not one knell to be heard. The reason, as the new porter told them, was, that the number of those who died was so great, that they had forbidden the bells ringing for any one; and people were all fetched away by the carts, rich as well as poor.

" Many thousands of people would now have fled away if they could, but nobody would let them pass; and the enclosed family began to be in great terror, for the houses were desolated round about them. The numbers of people that died were scarcely to be reckoned up: the bills gave an account of nearly 1500 a-week within the walls, notwithstanding the vast number of people that were gone away into the country: so that it was the master's opinion that there would not one soul remain in the whole city, but that all would perish.

However he concealed his fears as well as he was able; and continued as well his care over his family, as his earnest prayers to God every day, and as I may say every hour, for them.

" In the midst of this misery, and as he began to be very well pleased and much assisted by his new porter, and particularly in that he was one that, having had the distemper, was, as he concluded, in no danger of having it again; he was surprised with a fresh affliction: for, calling one morning to his new porter, nobody answered. He called several times again, and all that day and the next he heard nothing of him; but all the satisfaction he could get was from a watchman, who stood at the door of a house that was shut up—all which houses had *Lord, have mercy!* and a great red cross set on the door, and a watchman placed without, to prevent any coming out or going in. The watchman, hearing the master of the house call the porter by his name, answered, and told him the poor

man that used to stand at the door was sick of the plague, and he supposed was dead. The master answered, 'I know *he* was sick that I had first, and is dead; but this was another.' 'Well, Sir,' said the watchman, 'but he may be sick and dead too, I suppose, as well as the first.' 'No, no,' said the master, 'you must mistake: you mean the first.' 'No, Sir,' replied the watchman, 'I knew your first man, Abraham, was dead, but this man was called Thomas Molins, was he not?' 'Yes,' said the master: 'Then it is he I mean, Sir,' answered the watchman. 'Why that cannot be,' said the master, 'he had been ill of the plague before, and was recovered; and he cannot have it again.' 'Alas! Sir,' said the watchman, 'it is *that* I suppose makes you so hard to understand me. I know it is many people's opinion, that when any have had the distemper they are secure: but I assure you it is a mistake; for I have been twice recovered of it in the Pesthouse, and been well a

fortnight between the times, and now I am abroad again: but I do not think myself safe at all by that; for I know several that have had it three or four times; and some that have recovered three or four times have notwithstanding died of it afterwards.'—'And is my porter, Molins, sick of it again?' said the master. 'Yes, Sir,' said the watchman, 'I heard he was; but I will acquaint you more particularly to-morrow.'—Accordingly the next day, he called to the watchman again, who told him that he had enquired, and found that poor Molins, the porter, was carried away by the dead-carts, as they called them, the night before. His master was surprised exceedingly at this, and shut the wooden door immediately without speaking a word more: and going in sat him down, grieved most heartily, and wept by himself a great while, to think that two poor men had thus lost their lives as it were to preserve him.

"After some time, he considered that there was no room for him to be discouraged;

so, he went to his wife, and took a large glass of Canary wine, which was his usual cordial, and, putting as good a countenance on it as he could, said nothing to his family of the death of the poor man; but resolved to remain quietly in the condition he was in: and, as it pleased God that all his house continued in pretty good health, he felt that he had great reason to be comforted and thankful for that; and not to allow any sorrows for others to affect his mind.

"In this posture he remained about a fortnight more, having no manner of correspondence with the street; and he had resolved to have no more porters: so that he was perfectly without intelligence, except that still he found the watchman, he had formerly talked with, every day before the door of the house, as he thought, where he was at first. But after about a fortnight he grew impatient at being so entirely without intelligence, and seeing none of the weekly bills, and hearing nothing but the doleful noise of the dead-cart, and the bell.

At the end I say of the fortnight therefore he opened his wooden window, and calling to the watchman, asked him how he did; and how that house was where he was placed; supposing it the same where he had been before. 'Alas! master,' said the poor man, 'the distressed family are all dead and gone, except the journey-man, and he is carried to the Pesthouse, and I am placed at Mr. ——'s, at the next door; and they have three people sick and one dead here. He asked him then, in general, how it went in the city? He told him, very badly; that the last week's bill was above 8000 of all distempers; that it decreased at the other end of the town, in St. Giles's and in Holborn, the people being most of them dead or gone away; but that it increased dreadfully towards Aldgate and Stepney; and also in Southwark, where it had been more moderate before than in any other part of the town. In a word, this being the middle of September, the plague was now in its utmost fury and rage, only that, as above,

it was abated in the west end of the town, where it began; and, as the poor man told him, it had decreased a little in Cripplegate parish, though there still died there between four and five hundred a week. In the parish of Stepney, the deaths were above eight hundred a week.

"It was heavy news to this poor gentleman to hear to what a dreadful height the calamity was come; and yet it was some encouragement that it began to go off toward the east, and that it had decreased so much in Cripplegate parish: and he failed not to let his family know it. But still, as the houses on both sides of him, and almost the whole row on the side opposite to him, were distempered, and some whole families dead, it was very terrible to them to think how they yet lived in the midst of death.

"His family began now to be sorely afflicted for want of fresh air: and, with continued eating of salt meats, they began to grow scorbutic and out of order. He did

what he could, by desiring them to stir, and be active and busy about the house, to preserve health; but would by no means suffer any window or door to be opened: but, as the weather began to be cooler than it had been, he continued to keep fires in every room on that floor where they lodged, and had two of his family, who by turns sat up half a night, and two more the other half of the night, to keep the fires in, and watch the house for fear of mischief.—This scorbutic illness increased pretty much upon them, till it was relieved at last by the free use of lime and lemon juice, which he had provided among his stores.

"The streets were now a melancholy sight to look into. The pavement was overgrown with grass; it was not one time in twenty, that they looked through the glass, (for they never opened any casement,) that they could see any body going along, or so much as a door open. As for the shops they were all shut close, except that the apothecaries' and chandlers' shops kept

a door open for the letting people come for what they wanted. Not a coach or a cart was to be seen, except now and then a coach carrying a sick body to the Pest-house; and every night, three or four times a night, the dead-cart was heard, with the bell-man crying, 'Bring out your dead.'

"The poor master of the house was now so impatient for want of his porter, that he could not content himself without opening his wooden window two or three times, to talk with the watchman, who continued posted at the door of the house that was shut up; and to inform himself how things went: but at last he looked for him and found he was gone too, which was a great loss to him: and he was the more troubled, because he intended to have given him some money. But one day, as he was looking through the glass, he spied the man standing on the other side of the street, and looking up towards his house. Upon this he ran immediately to his wooden window, and opened it, though

not forgetting to make the usual smoke with gunpowder for his preservation. When he had opened the window, the poor watchman told him he was glad to see him still alive; and that he had come twice before in hopes to see him, but was afraid he had not been well: that he came to tell him he was dismissed from the house he had been set to watch, most of the poor people being dead; and that, if he pleased to accept of it, he would sit at his door in the daytime, as his two porters had done. He was glad of the offer, and engaged him to take his post at the door.

"The man had not been at the door many days, when he called to his master, and told him he was glad to give him the good news that the infection abated, and that the weekly bill was now decreased 1837 in one week—which had of a sudden excited a great deal of joy among the people. This was about the last week in September. The next week the bill decreased again between six and seven hun-

dred: though the whole number was still 5725. The burials in Cripplegate however amounted only to 196.—which was but a very few compared to 886 a-week, which had died there a few weeks before. So that the plague was as much ceased to them, as it would have been to the whole city if there had not died above 1000 or 1200 per week.

"His sons would fain have had him now, like Noah, send out a dove, that is, let them go out of doors to see how things were, and how the city looked; and they urged him the more, because they began to hear a noise of people in the streets passing to and fro, and that pretty often: but he kept his guard, and would not let any one stir out, on any terms or on any pretence whatsoever.

"The next week but two, which was the third in October, there was another great decrease of 1849 in one bill: and now his porter knocked at the door, and desired to speak with his master, to tell him some good news. The master of the

family soon appeared at his usual wooden window, with one of his sons and one of his daughters. The watchman told him, that now he hoped he could assure him that the visitation was really going off; that there had died 1849 less last week than the week before; and that the Lord Mayor had ordered the carts to cease going about, except twice a-week in several parts of the city, and in others but once each night; and that there had died but 88 in Cripplegate parish that week of all diseases: that indeed the distemper continued very high in Stepney, and especially in Southwark; but that in the city it was extremely abated. He let down to the poor man, for his good news, a pint-bottle of good sack, and a small basket with provisions for him and his family. Henceforward they turned their two days of fasting, which they had constantly kept in the family every week, into one day of fasting and one day of thanksgiving.

"But now on the sudden, to the great

surprise of the whole family, the master himself, who was the life and spring of all the rest, and of all the management which, under God, had so evidently preserved them, was taken very sick.—It is not for me, at this distance, to describe the terrible consternation they were all in. Not only the whole family concluded he was struck with the plague, but he himself from the apprehension that he should be the means of giving it to his children, would insist upon their having him carried out to the Pesthouse. His wife and all the children declared against it, and protested to him, every one of them, that they would rather have the distemper with him, and leave the event to God's mercy. By these importunities he was prevailed upon: but he ordered a bed to be made immediately in one of the upper rooms, mentioned before, and went presently to bed, taking such things as were prescribed publicly by the College of Physicians, to be given on any one's being first seized with the

plague—which were designed to provoke perspiration. Upon taking these things he fell into a profuse perspiration, and continued so all night. Any one may suppose the family had but little sleep that night, being in the utmost concern for so careful and so kind a father; as also so very anxious to know whether he had the distemper or not.—No more can I represent in a lively manner enough the joy there was in the house, when the next day they found their father, who had fallen into a good sleep, was so much refreshed, and so well, as to satisfy them all that his disorder was not at all infectious; but that it rather proceeded from the great weight and pressure of his cares, which had been too heavy for his spirits, and withal from having taken some cold, as they thought, by standing too long talking at the wooden window to his watchman. In two or three days, he was about the house again, and tolerably well.

"While the master of the house lay thus, the family had no joy of the decrease of the

plague; for what was the decrease to them, if it broke out now in their own house? But, as soon as he recovered a little, then they began to look abroad again for intelligence. And now they could see through their windows a new countenance of things in the streets, and upon the houses; that the people began to go up and down the streets very frequently; and some began to open their shops, at least to open them half way. The hackney coaches also were heard rumbling in the streets: so that, without calling to the porter, they could easily perceive that the distemper was greatly decreased, and that the people who were left had more courage than before; in a word that the plague was going off, at least in the city, and chiefly on that side where they lived. Their porter, or watchman, confirmed it to them the next day, when the weekly bill came about, which he brought to them. The master contented himself with hearing how it was, but would not let the bill be taken in: nor would he yet abate

one tittle of his strict guarding of his family from conversing with the streets. It was now the last week in October, and so greatly was the plague decreased, that there were but 22 buried of it in all Cripplegate parish, and but 28 the week before: which was almost as surprising as the great rise of it at first: though even this week the bills were high in Stepney parish and in Southwark.

"Now, though this was joyful news to this as well as to other families, yet he was as anxious about the danger of opening his doors too soon, as he had been at first of keeping them open too long. He was aware that people would be rash in their joy, and that, presuming on the health of the city being re-established, they would return to their houses, and bring out their goods, on which others had died, and air them, too soon, and so perhaps bring back the infection. And it was just as he had said: for about the middle of November the bills on a sudden increased 400 at once,

and rose from a thousand to fourteen hundred. The city was in a terrible fright on that occasion: but it pleased God that it went off again, and, the weather coming in cool the distemper abated again, and the bills continued decreasing, till in the third week of November they were once more under a thousand of all distempers, whereof only 652 were of the plague.

"It is true that, considering the number of people who were dead, which was very near a hundred thousand of all diseases, and the great number fled away, which, according to the most moderate guess, was at least three times as many; considering the numbers who had had the distemper and were recovered, who, though, as was evident in the case of the second porter, they were not entirely free from the danger of its return, yet were not so very easily infected as others: I say considering this, the dying of 652 a-week now was as much as the dying of 2000 a-week was at the beginning of August. This made the house-

holder continue his caution with the same rigour as ever, and indeed with rather more, for he remembered well what a consternation the people were every where in, when the plague was so increased, that there died from 800 to 1000 a week of all distempers; and even in the week I now speak of, which was from the 14th to the 21st of November, the bill stood at 905, whereof, as already stated, 652 were of the plague.

"Besides, there died of the plague that very week, *in the city*, above twice the number that died in the week from the 21st to the 28th of July, when the bill was 1761 in all: for then there died but 56 in all the city within the walls, whereas now there died 127 of the plague: so that the city was not so healthy then as the out-parts.

"All these things he calculated exactly; and, as he said, was very loth to lose all the fruit of his care and caution, and of the close confinement he had submitted to, by a rash and needless adventure. His reasons were so good, and their own safety so much

concerned, that his family submitted to the restraint with the more cheerfulness, though they began to labour hard for breath at that time, and to be very desirous of air, having been shut up so closely and so long a time.

"At length, on the first of December, he opened his street door for the first time, and walked out. The bill of mortality the week before was 544 of all diseases, whereof only 333 were of the plague, and nearly half of that number were in Stepney parish, and on the Southwark side of the river, where the sickness continued latest, as it had been longest before it began. The first of December, I say, he walked out; but he suffered none of his family to stir but himself. He viewed the streets, the houses and shops, but conversed with no one; nor did he see any body that he knew, except a few just in his own neighbourhood. A vast number of houses were standing empty and deserted, the inhabitants being gone into the country: yet in some of these he observed servants return-

ed, who had opened the windows and doors, and were, as we call it, airing the houses and the goods; making fires in all the rooms, opening the windows, and burning perfumes; and in that manner preparing the houses for the return of the families that belonged to them. The number of people in the streets was greater indeed than he had expected: but this seemed to be occasioned rather by the curiosity of the people which were left, which led them to go more abroad than otherwise they would have done: for in the back streets, and ways less frequented, he found very few.

"He came home again in a few hours, not having visited any body, or made any enquiries after any of his friends, or any one else; and resolved to keep up his close quarters one week longer. Nor would he buy any fresh provisions, or suffer any one to go to market; but resolved upon some new measures which he put in practice the week following. At that time he went out early in the morning, and taking his eldest

son and his apprentice with him, walked on foot as far as Tottenham High-Cross. Finding there a house of one of his acquaintance, which had not been infected at all, he took lodgings or apartments in it for his whole family, and the same day returned to London. In the course of the week he removed them all thither, carrying his own goods and some part of his provisions; all which he caused to be fetched by waggons belonging to the country people, and such as he had good information were sound, and had not been infected at all.

"Here he not only relieved his family with fresh air, which they so much wanted, but with fresh provisions also, which he had now brought to them from Waltham market, by his old higgler who had supplied the family at the beginning of the year.

"He left his house in London fast locked up, except the gate into his yard, the key of which he gave to the honest watchman, and went himself, or his son, or his apprentice, two or three times a week, to see that

every thing was safe and in good order. And thus he continued till the February following: for all the month of December and January the plague continued in the city; and at the latter end of December it began to increase again; which was believed to be occasioned by the people's returning faster than ordinary to their dwellings: so that the third week in December, the increase was 83; and then there died of the plague still 281, the whole bill being 525.—But by the beginning of February, the family being well recovered and refreshed, and all in perfect health, and the city being filled again with people, and in a pretty good state of health, he removed all back again, and came to his house, opened his doors, and carried on his business as before.

"Thus, next to the protection of God's Providence, a complete retirement from the street, and from conversing on any account whatever with the rest of the people; separating from them, and having, as we may say, nothing to do with them,

neither to buy, or sell, or speak, or sit with them or near them, was proved to be capable of effectually preserving a man or a family, in the time of the direst infection.

" I will not suppose this man or his family, who were so severe in fasting and humbling themselves before God all the time they were under apprehensions of the distemper, and surrounded with daily experience of the dreadful calamity that lay upon the city, could so far forget themselves now, as not to give God thanks in the most solemn manner possible for their deliverance. That part I take for granted. They could not be rational creatures, much less Christians, and retain no sense of such a signal preservation. I will therefore, I say, take that for granted, and suggest that the master of the family with the utmost seriousness of devotion performed this part, and that he obliged all his family to do the like.

" I am also to observe that, whereas this gentleman laid in a magazine of stores

sufficient for his family for a whole year; and as he was not shut up above seven months or thereabouts, he had a quantity of various articles remaining: and these you are to understand that he brought out when the markets were open, and provisions came in plenty again, and might be procured without danger, and made a thank-offering of them to the poor namely,

1500 lbs. of Biscuit
300 lbs. of Cheese
5 Hogsheads of Beer
5 Flitches of Bacon
2 Barrels and more of salted beef."

Thus with his piety towards God, he combined, as was so befitting the occasion, charity to the poor, numbers of whom must needs be, at such a time, in circumstances of the greatest exigency and distress.

CONVERSATIONS,

ETC.

We now come to preparations *for* the Pestilence; preparations of mind, such as may fit us for meeting the visitation without injury, should God be pleased to send it upon us; and that, whether its issue to us be life or death. "This," our author observes, "is the hardest part of the work by far; but, of the two, of infinitely the greater consequence; in proportion as the eternal state into which we are all to pass from this life is more important than the present state.—Life and time," he proceeds, "are indeed of an inestimable value; but they are so only or principally, as on the happy conclusion of them depends the

eternal welfare of the person to whom they are so valuable. The preparations for an eternal state are only to be made in time, which once slipped away, lost and unapplied, is irrecoverably lost for ever.

" The approaches of death are oftentimes imperceptible, and the attacks sudden ; the distempers by which we are carried away are violent ; and it is a double terror to the dying person to have the work of dying and the work of repentance both upon his hands together. O sinner ! remember that the terrors of thy conscience will be a weight too heavy to be borne at the same time with the terrors of death : nay, the terrors of conscience are those alone which give terrors to death, and make the passage out of life dreadful. . . . It is enough to have a violent fever drink up the moisture and life, and not at the same time to have *the arrows of the Almighty drinking up the spirits.* Therefore that we may prepare in time for the dreadful moments which are approaching ; that when the call is heard no other noise

may drown our comforts; and that the business of life may now without any delay be to prepare for death: that such may be the case, this tract is written. The apprehensions we are under at this time of the approaching calamity, which afflicts our neighbours,[1] are a summons to this preparation; and that more forcible than can be given from the mouth of man: and many thousands will have reason to be thankful for so long a warning, so timely a summons—even all who listen to its voice. The goodness of God is very conspicuous in this, that, as a pestilence, when it comes, sweeps whole towns and cities of people away, and death rages like an overflowing stream, so that there is then little time given for repentance and calling upon God; so more time is usually given beforehand for these purposes, and that time accompanied with greater advantages, from the impression which is made on the minds of men. That solemn interval ought

[1] The French.

to be taken as the allotted time of preparation, and to be improved accordingly. Of this you shall now be more fully admonished, in some discourses which took place in a family in London just before the last great plague.

"The time before that dreadful visitation was, as the present is, a time of apprehension and alarm; though the warning was not so long, or the danger so remote. The distemper, according to that eminent physician Dr. Hodges, was brought to Holland on board a ship, in some bales of goods from the Levant. From Holland it came over hither: how, or by whom, was never particularly known, at least not publicly. The first that died of it here, at least that was put into the bills openly as dead of the plague, was in the parish of St. Giles in the Fields. It was reported that the whole family died; and I have some reason to believe they did: but there was but one entered in the weekly bill, and this was about the 20th of December, 1664.

"This was heaven's first alarm to the city of London. As it was a blow near the heart, or in the capital itself, and not, as in France, almost four hundred miles off, so it more nearly touched the people, and their apprehensions seemed to be in proportion more serious and affecting.

"At this period, two brothers and a sister, the children of one pious and serious mother, a widow, lived together in one house in the city. They were all grown to years of discretion, the sister (the youngest) being about nineteen, and one of the brothers nearly forty; the other about twenty-six years of age. The sister was a most religious and well-instructed young woman: the brothers, men of business, engaged in it and taken up much with it. They had all been religiously educated, and were what we call sober and orderly people; but the gentlemen, being engrossed in business, and hurried in the world, getting money and growing rich, had not made the concern of eternal life the chief business of the present

life, as we all ought to do. They were merchants, and had lived abroad; but, having returned to England, they had large concerns, and transacted much business both on the Royal Exchange and at the water-side. As the eldest of the two brothers was a widower, and had but two children, who were very small, and the youngest brother a bachelor, the young lady, their sister, was their housekeeper, and they called her familiarly their Governess. And such she was indeed many ways; being not only the guide of their whole family, which was large, but a faithful monitor to themselves also as occasion presented; though not at first with all the success that she could have wished. The old lady did not live in the house with them, but, having two or three younger children with her, lived a little way out of town. She had also two other sons, young gentlemen of about nineteen and twenty years of age, who were abroad in Spain or Italy, and placed in very good business by the directions and on

account of their brothers. The good mother of this family, having received early impressions, as all the town indeed had, that a heavy and grievous judgment was coming upon the city, and upon the whole nation, began to have a heavy heart, and to be deeply concerned on account of her sons; and, as she came frequently to town, she failed not on every occasion to be putting them in mind what a stroke, as she said, was coming upon the nation, and upon the city in particular; and to let them know what a dismal time it would be with all those people especially, whose eternal state was not secured, and who had not the comfort of a safe passage out of life in prospect. This she urged upon her children every time she came to see them; and particularly would be representing to them how it was in London in the time of the great plague, as it was then called, which had been twenty-nine years before, which, said she, I very well remember, having lived here all that time, and

lost several relations and acquaintances who died of the infection: and likewise in the plague eleven years before that, in 1624, when there died of all distempers above 54,000 people in London and the out-parishes, not reckoning the city of Westminster, orthe parishes of Stepney, Hackney, Islington, Lambeth, Rotherhithe or Christchurch, and Newington in Surry.

"She talked so often of this, that her eldest son used to tell her she was a little too positive; that it looked as if she would be thought prophetic; that the plague was not actually broken out because one man had died of it; that he believed it was always in one part or other of the city a little; that the plague of 1636, which she remembered, held 8 years; and that every year there died more or less, from 300 to 3000; that there was yet no publication of it, and I hope, madam, said he, there will be none. He urged therefore that they should not be always alarming one another as if the evil was at the door; that it was

terrible enough when it came, but that to be always in a fright about it, was to make it a judgment while it was no judgment, and the like: in a word, like her sister preachers, Mary Magdalen and the other women, *her words seemed to them as idle tales.* (Luke xxiv. 11.)

"However, as a truly affectionate mother, she continued her monitory discourses to them. 'You, sons,' said she, 'are grown up, and are above my admonition as a mother; but you cannot be out of the reach of exhortation, and you ought not to take it amiss that I press you to prepare for the dreadful time of a visitation, in case it should come.' 'No, madam,' said the eldest son, 'none of your children will take it amiss; but we think you make your company, which was always pleasant to us, to be a little melancholy, for that you are always upon this frightful subject. I doubt it is too much upon your mind, and makes you heavy-hearted when you might be cheerful.' Thus their discourse began.

"*Mother.* I cannot look back, child, without horror of mind, upon the dreadful time in the year 1625. I was but newly married and settled in the world; and we were all full of mirth as you are now: and on a sudden the distemper broke out, and all our smiles were turned into lamentations and tears.

Son. It came suddenly it may be, without any warning.

M. No, no; people had warning too: but we that were young people then, just as you are now, would take no notice of it: we were marrying and giving in marriage to the very day that it came upon us; and, when good people spoke to us of repenting, and preparing to meet the Lord in his day of wrath, and humbling ourselves under his mighty hand; we thought them, just as you do now, too melancholy and phlegmatic; that they did not do well to alarm the public, and put families and cities into fright and disorder: and thus we went on.

S. Well, madam, and yet, for all that, it may be you thought as seriously of it when it came as they did.

M. Ay, son, but they that had thought seriously of it so long before had a great advantage of us, and were so much before us in their preparations.

S. They had so much more indeed to answer for if they were not better prepared.

M. I think, son, it should be rather said, we had so much the more to answer for if we were worse prepared.

S. But, madam, what can we do in the case as it stands now? every one ought to prepare for death whether there be a plague in the town or not: death comes in many other shapes than that of a pestilence.

M. That is true, child, and I do not speak against daily preparation for death: God forbid that I should: but, when an infection comes, child, death seems to come with more terrors about him, cuts down swifter, and we have less time to think of what is to follow.

S. Some reflect upon the severity of the judgment, on that very score; in that people are swept away with a stroke, and have scarce time to look up.

M. No, son, let none say so; for I affirm that God's mercies are so interspersed with his judgments, that we have abundant cause to acknowledge them, and ought to keep our eye upon them in this particular, namely, that God always gives people more time to prepare for death in the case of a plague than of an ordinary distemper.

S. How, madam? That cannot be, for in the plague people often die in twelve hours after they are taken; whereas in fevers and other distempers they generally lie as many days, or more.

M. Ay, son, but then you do not consider that the plague generally approaches a country by slow degrees, and you have many months' warning of it before it comes: so that, if it swept all away in a day, there is no room to call it sudden, for every one had warning of it beforehand.

S. But people do not look on the judgment as particular, till it touches them personally, or points to them in a family capacity; that is to say, till it has gotten into the house.

M. That people do not take warning is their folly and fault; but that God gives them warning is their mercy, if they knew how to make use of it.

S. Every body is willing to hope he shall escape.

M. But every body ought to provide as if he were *not* to escape. Every soldier in the army hopes to escape being killed, but each soldier puts on his head-piece, that he may fare the better if he is hit.

S. We should prepare, no doubt: but to be apprehensive continually, as if we were sure to have the distemper, is even to fright ourselves into it. All physicians agree that we should keep our minds easy and calm; that the passions of fear and anger prepare the constitution to receive and nourish the infection; at least to dispirit and debilitate

us, so that we are not duly fortified to resist the enemy which we have to struggle with.

M. You greatly mistake the thing, child, and mistake my meaning: I am of the same mind, and say as the doctors do, though upon other grounds. The mind should be kept calm and unencumbered, that nature may be assisted to repulse the enemy that attacks her: but then I say, that nothing can animate and encourage the mind like a firm resignation to the will of God, and a comfortable hope that it shall be well with us beyond the present life. This is certainly the best preparation for the distemper.

S. I do not deny that we should be always preparing for death; but we should not be discouraging ourselves before it comes.

M. What do you call discouraging yourselves? Preparation is the only way to avoid being discouraged.

S. You talk of preparation as if I was sure it would come upon me.

M. As soon as we have reason to be

satisfied that the distemper is begun, and is come among us, I think every one, *as far as his preparations are concerned*, should look upon himself as if absolutely smitten, as much as if he saw the tokens upon his flesh.

S. And is not that all phlegmatic and vapours, madam? Do not many, do you think, in the plague as well as in other distempers, fancy they have it, till they really bring it; and so have it because they fancied they should have it?

M. You forget what I said, son: I said *as to our preparations.*

S. You distinguish nicely, madam; but others will take it another way.

M. I distinguish clearly, son, though not so nicely as you represent. I say, *as to our preparations* we should do thus: that is to say, we ought to prepare for death, as if we had the distemper just now upon us. And my reason is good: because I can assure you, when the body is exhausted and tortured with that distemper,

there will be as little capacity as there may be time, to look up to God, and to prepare for death.

S. Why, madam, you would have us all think ourselves dead men, or as if we were under a sentence of death; only reprieved a little while, and to be executed at the pleasure of the judge.

M. Why truly our case is no other than that in the whole ordinary course of life. We are all *appointed to die, and after death to judgment;* (Heb. x. 27, 28;) only for the present we have a merciful reprieve. The comparison may be frightful, but it is really not so remote from the act: and in the present instance of the plague breaking out in the city or town where we live, it is much more to the purpose; especially with respect to persons whose business and circumstances call them to continue in the city on such an occasion, as you say your's do.

S. Well, madam, you have been in the city during two plagues, that in 1625, and

that in 1636, and you are still alive: why may we not fare as well now, if it should come? [1]

M. The more I have of the mercy of God to account for, child. But I cannot say I was in the city all the while; for the last plague I was absent in Cheshire. But in the first indeed I saw wonderful things and terrible to relate: and this makes me say that we should all look upon ourselves as dead persons, or as reprieved criminals; and, giving up ourselves entirely into God's hands, should stand ready expecting to answer at the first call, and to say, *Come, Lord Jesus:* for take my word, son, if it comes, you will say it is a time to tremble at; a time to be prepared *for*, not a time to prepare *in*.

S. But, madam, it may please God to avert the judgment; he may be better to us than our fears.

[1] How obvious that the alternative to be prepared for is the other—that of our *not* so escaping. Our preparation (to say the least,) will not hurt us, if we escape: but, if we do not, what will be the effect of our *neglect* of preparation?

M. If it should be so, no man would ever repent of his preparations, if they were sincere, or say it was so much pains lost. But flatter not yourself, son, with its not coming: it is not *coming*, but *come*: have you not seen it begun? There are several dead of it already, and more than you think of.

S. One or two have died in St. Giles's parish indeed, but that was last December: and we are now in March, and there has been but one more; so that I hope it is over.

M. That hoping it is over is a snare of the devil: flatter not yourself with it. When the plague begins, though there be but one or two that die at first, you never hear that it goes off so: it always goes on, though it begins slowly: and that slowness of its beginning is what I call the merciful warning given to us all of the approach of the judgment.

S. So that, when one or two die, you would have us take it the plague is begun!

M. Yes, I do insist upon it, and that it always goes on. But further, let me tell you, I know very well that, when our weekly bills set down one or two to die of the plague, you may depend upon there being more; for people are always diligent to conceal their families being infected; because they would not have their shops forsaken, their houses shut up, or themselves be shunned as belonging to distempered families: and therefore, in the last plague of 1636, I remember there was so much fraud used by the parish-clerks in forming the weekly bills, that it was certain there died 200 a-week of the plague, when by the bills there were stated only 10, 12, 15, or thereabouts.

S. So that you look upon the plague as a thing already begun among us?

M. Indeed, child, I do: and I believe firmly that it is so at this time.

S. And what would you have us do?

M. My answers, son, are short to that question, whether you mean by *us*, us of

this family, or of the nation: I would have us return to God, lie at his feet, take the words of scripture, and say, *Thou hast smitten, and thou wilt bind us up.* (Hos. vi. 1.) In a word, I would have all prepare themselves for death; prepare together, and prepare apart.

S. As much as if they were on their deathbeds!

M. Ay, indeed, the very same; and be thankful, humbly thankful for the time allowed for it. Thankful that God hath in mercy spared them an hour, with a reserve of health and strength to turn to him and repent: for, be assured, when the visitation begins, there will be no room for it: all will be filled with horror and desolation; every one mourning for himself; no composure, no compassion, no affection; none to comfort, none to assist; nothing but death in all its most dismal shapes, and in its most frightful appearances.

S. Why, madam, if your rule were to be observed, there should be an immediate

cessation of all business, from the king upon the throne, to the school-boy, and to the beggar in the street: all should fall on their knees together like the people of Nineveh.

M. O that such a sight were to be seen! I am so fully persuaded that the plague that is coming, and that I say is now begun among us, is a messenger sent from God to scourge us for our crying sins, that if the voice of this nation were as universally sent up to heaven as was that of the citizens of Nineveh, and with the same sincerity of humiliation; I firmly believe that, as was then the case, God would repent him of his fierce anger, that we should not perish.

S. But you will not see that here, madam.

M. No, child, I fear not; and therefore I am not talking of national humiliations, but of family and personal humiliations and repentance: and that, not on expectation that God should withdraw the judgment from the country wherein we live, but that he may withhold his hand, and the hand

of his destroying angel from our houses, our families and our persons.

S. Why, madam, you would put us all into confusion: you would fright and terrify us so, that we must shut up our shops, embargo our ships, close our ports: the customhouse would have no business, the exchange no merchants, the merchandize no market: we should be all frighted out of our wits.

M. Ay, ay, I wish I could see people so far out of their wits as that comes to: I should then expect that some miracle of deliverance would follow, as was the case with Nineveh. But it is not to be expected here.

S. No, indeed, madam, I believe not.

M. No, no, there is not a spirit of national humiliation among us; but I see national sins rather come up to such a height as they never were at in this nation before: the dregs of the late wars[1] are not purged out, and will not be purged out but

[1] The civil wars.

by fire; that is to say by the fire of God's judgment, which is already begun among us.

S. But they have been as bad formerly, madam.

M. They may have been as bad formerly in the revelling days of king ——— but never worse than now; and this even under the pretence of greater reformation! all manner of wickedness and public debauchery being let loose among us, and breaking in upon us like a flood, encouraged even by those who ought to suppress it, and by the example of those from whom we hoped to find examples of good; or at least to have profaneness and immoralities punished and discouraged.

S. The world was always as wicked, I think as it is now, madam, since I remember it.

M. But we hoped the late turn of affairs should have given a blow to the wickedness of the times: but I think it has rather made them worse.

parations for dying, as if it were this minute upon me: for then as I said, I must make my will, shut up my counting-house, stop all my shipping of goods, pay off my servants, and send for the minister.

M. This I do really call jesting with it, son. But, since you will speak of these things, I must tell you that every man that has any family affairs to settle ought to do it forthwith; for a time of the plague will be no time for making of wills, and settling estates, I assure you; any more than it will be for repentance. When ministers will not be found to comfort the souls of dying penitents, it may be still harder to find scriveners to make their wills. When husbands are abandoned of their wives, and wives of their husbands, fathers of their children, and children of their fathers and mothers; when all fly from one another for fear of their own lives, there will be no room for settling affairs, as you call it.

S. Dear madam, it makes one's blood run chill in the veins to hear you talk so.

Come, pray let us talk of somewhat else: this is enough to make one die with the fear of it.

M. O child, it is much worse to die in that condition itself, than to suffer from the fear of it. I could tell you such stories of the dreadful circumstances of families and individuals, in the several times of such judgments as these—cases which have happened in my time, and which I have particularly heard—as would indeed make your blood run chill in your veins.

S. O madam, do not tell us such dismal stories: you should rather encourage us.

M. I would say any thing to encourage you to go about the preparation I speak of; but I fear that is not the encouragement you mean.

Daughter. No, madam, that is not the encouragement my brother means.

M. What then, child?

D. My brother thinks you should

rather encourage us to hope it will not come, or that if it should come we may escape it.

M. What can the end of such encouragement be?

S. Why, that we should not be always poring upon it, but might live as cheerfully as we used to do.

D. My mother seems to intimate, that to encourage us so can have no other effect than to encourage us to continue unprepared for the event.

S. I hope we are all prepared for it.

D. I can answer but for one: I dare not say I am prepared, unless it be to die at the very thoughts of it.

S. Ay, why that is the very thing I say: my mother is enough to fright us all to death.

M. Why, as my daughter said, what can I do? To encourage you, as you call it, is to encourage you to put off all preparation. Is it possible for me to do that? No: but I would encourage you to

be prepared: *that* would be to destroy all the reason of fear.

S. Why you see my sister says, madam, she is ready to die at the thoughts of it.

D. O but, brother, do not mistake me: it is not at the thoughts of preparing, but at the thoughts of my being found unprepared.

M. There is a great deal of difference in that, son.

S. There is a difference in the cause of the fear; but that frightening of people, one way or another, is what I cannot think ought to be.

M. I cannot think that to move people to prepare themselves against the worst is justly to be called frightening them.

S. It is alarming us.

M. Ay, but, son, it is not alarming us when we ought not to be alarmed, or frightening us without cause.

S. Well, madam, I will not oppose your cautions. I know you mean well;

but you will give us leave to hope that it may not be so bad.

D. Dear brother, I do not find that my mother insists on what will, or will not be; but, as the danger at least is real, she moves us to be ready for the worst.

S. But my mother says the plague is actually begun: I hope it is not.

D. Well, brother, I hope so too: but I am afraid it is; and from this hour, I assure you, if God please to assist me, I will prepare for it, as if it was not only come and broken out in the city, but come upon me, and I was actually infected with it.

S. And from this time forward I conclude you will have the plague. Your frightening yourself so with it is enough to bring it on.

M. Oh, that the whole nation were so frightened into the same resolution! God assist you, my dear girl, and cause you to go on comfortably in such a work.

S. You bring it to a more solemn conclusion than I intended it, madam. I wish

every one may prepare for it, but I cannot say I would have them frightened into their preparations: that was all I meant, and the reason is, because such public alarming of the people has in it public mischief: it does hurt to the nation in general, injures trade, wounds the poor, sets other nations upon their guard against us as if we were already infected, sinks credit, and discourages the people.

M. I have nothing to do with your politics; all your reasons of state are of no weight here: it were better all those mischiefs should follow, and the people were prevailed upon to begin a general sincere repentance, than that all those things should be avoided, and the poor stupid people be left to sleep on in security, till they sink into destruction.

S. Well, madam, that is true too: but these things may be done prudently, and with respect to the public peace; for all such alarms, as disturb people's minds with the fear of public calamities, tend

to confusion, and to set us all in an uproar.

M. To put an end to all the frivolous pleadings about frightening and alarming the people, I say that to persuade men to preparation for death, because such a judgment is likely to come upon them, is not alarming or frightening them at all. A serious persuading men to repent and prepare is persuading them to put themselves into such a posture that they may not be frightened, or surprized, or alarmed: for to be prepared is to be past being frightened, and to be in the only condition that gives courage. You may as well say John the Baptist frightened the people, when he preached to them and cried, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

S. Then we must come, madam, to enquire what you mean by preparations.

D. If I may speak before my mother, I will tell you, brother, what I believe my mother means; or at least how I understand it.

M. I doubt not you both understand it, and understand it alike.

D. I understand by preparations for death, repentance and a reformed life.[1]

[1] Here we recognise the defective or erroneous language or doctrine of the times in which the work before us was written. The scriptures speak of two things, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Acts xx. 21:) but here in fact only one thing is spoken of—for what is "repentance" without "reformation of life?" and of what worth is mere outward "reformation of life," not springing from an inward principle of "repentance towards God?"—Moreover that part of the religion of a sinner which is here omitted is the great one of all, on which every thing else depends—which is therefore even allowed to stand alone for the whole, in another chapter of the book of Acts, and in many other places. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 30, 31.) Repentance is necessary, and reformation of life is necessary; *as* necessary as any man can represent them to be: but a true and lively "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," will effectually secure *them;* while they will never exist in any genuine state without *it*.—Omitting or throwing into shade faith in Christ, we thus treat that which is the *sole* medium of our acceptance to the divine favour, and the sole channel (so to speak,) through which we receive that grace and strength without which we can "do nothing" good: we run infinite risk of leading the sinner to a wrong dependence on his own repentance and amendment: we approach too nearly towards inverting the order of our truly evangelical Confession; and reading it, "Have mercy upon us, spare us, restore us, *seeing that we do now* lead a sober,

M. They are the general indeed, child: there may be many particulars in them, but I am no preacher: the rest will follow of course. Repent and reform: those two will contain all you can want or I desire.

righteous, and godly life;" instead of, "Have mercy—pardon—restore—*and grant that we* MAY *hereafter* (henceforward) lead such a life, to the glory of thy holy name."—The Saviour, in fact, is *from the first* to be held out to every sinner, who feels any desire or need of salvation, as his "all in all:" constituted by the Father to be the sole author of all his salvation. "Him hath God the Father sealed:" He is "made of God unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption:" through his sacrifice and intercession, his "obedience unto death" for us, and for the sake of this only, we are to receive pardon, peace, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and every blessing: faith, or humble earnest dependence on him alone, is the sole link which connects us with him, and brings home to us all his blessings, "without money and without price"—without all regard even to our repentance and reformation, *considered as any ground of dependence—as giving us any title to favour*: "it is *of* faith that it might be *by* grace." (Rom. iv. 16.) To this point then is the sinner to be directed from the very *first*: hence all his hope and comfort are to be derived: and from no other source is he to seek them, even to the *last*.

I have been anxious to make these statements, the very first time occasion was given for them, in order to supply a defect, or correct an error, in our author's theology. But, this being done, it is but justice to say, that we shall soon find his error or his defect to be by no means so serious as from this first

S. Nobody can object that we ought not to repent and reform.

M. Well, child, I only press to the present going about it, because the judgments of God are at hand. And you complain that this is frightening people: in which I think you are mistaken.

S. No, madam, if you mean no otherwise than that, I join with you with all my heart. Certainly we should be persuaded by all just and reasonable arguments to repentance and reformation: I did not deny that. I only said, I hope the plague may not be so near as you fear it is.

opening we might have expected. This will appear when the present suspicious language is qualified and corrected by all the strong expressions which follow, of conscious sinfulness and unworthiness; of the renunciation of all self-confidence, and dependence on any thing we do; of the necessity of "casting ourselves upon infinite mercy alone, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and finally by the explicit notice of "faith in Christ" as our only source of hope, and the citation of those very texts of scripture which were adduced near the opening of this note. With all these passages before us, we should not be following a scriptural example were we to "make a man an offender for a word," to the extent that some would do.

M. Well, son, we will not differ about that: if it pleases God to spare us, and to spare the land in which we live, I shall be one of the first to rejoice and give thanks: and, though I dare not say I expect it, I shall not cease to pray for it; still carrying this along with me in all I have to say of it, that to repent and reform our lives and turn with all our hearts to the Lord, which is what I mean by preparation, is the only way to be unsurprized at it when it comes upon us. A mind suitably prepared is a mind fortified and made bold to meet the worst; prepared to give up itself into the hands of a merciful Saviour. A heart prepared is the heart the scripture speaks of, when it says, *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.* (Psalm cxii. 7.)

" Thus this conference between the mother and the son ended for that time.—It was now about the month of April, 1665, and there had died but one of the plague since December; and that was in

the beginning of February: so that the eldest brother used frequently to laugh at his sister about the long dialogue they had held with their mother on the subject of the plague coming upon them, and its being actually begun. And once or twice he jested with her a little profanely, she thought, about her preparations, as she called them, for the plague. This grieved the young lady, and made her shed tears several times; and once she took the freedom to say, 'Dear brother, you jest at my preparations with too much reason, they being but very weak and imperfect: I pray God I may be able to prepare myself better against such a dreadful time, if ever it should come. But I beseech you, brother, to take care that your own preparation be not a jest indeed, when such a time comes: and, if it should be so, how will you be able to stand it? for certainly nothing but a mind well prepared can be able to bear up. How shall *our hearts endure, or our hands be strong* in such a day as that?'

" It was in the very anguish of her mind that she said this to her brother, and not with any passion or displeasure at his ill usage of her: but she did it with such seriousness, such gravity, and so many tears, that he was very much affected with it; asked her pardon; told her he would not jest with her any more upon that subject; that he was satisfied she was much better prepared than he was, and that she was in the right; that he would for the future do all that lay in his power to encourage her preparations; that, though he had not received such impressions himself from his mother's discourse as she had, yet he was far from thinking her in the wrong; and that, should such a time come as their mother had talked of, he could not deny that she was much better prepared to stand it than he was; but that his dependence was, that God would spare them, and not bring such a calamity upon them.

" This healed that little wound his loose way of talking had made, and his sister was

pacified. She told him she was glad to find him more serious on a subject so weighty: that, as to the freedom he took with her, that was nothing; but that it grieved her so, that she could not bear it, to hear him speak slightingly of the most dreadful judgments of God, that were at that time abroad in the earth: that, as she was entirely of her mother's opinion, that it would not be long before the plague broke out here, however he might censure and perhaps ridicule that thought as melancholy and vapourish; yet that, as she was fully possessed with a belief of it, it could not but very sorely afflict her, for his sake, to think how light he made of it: and that her satisfaction was now as great, in proportion, to see him abate of the levity with which he had talked of these things.

"It was not above a fortnight after this discourse, that the town had another alarm, and her brother was the person that brought her home the news of it: for,

about the 20th of April, the report was spread all over the town, that the plague had broken out again in St. Giles's parish, and that there was a whole family dead of it.

"The young lady was in her chamber one morning, when her brother, having been out about his affairs, came home in a very great concern; and, coming up to her door, said, 'O sister, we are all undone,' 'Undone!' said his sister; 'what is the matter?' He could not speak again for a good while; but, as his sister was frighted, and pressed him again, repeating the words, 'What is the matter?' at last he cried out again, 'We are all undone, sister! My mother and you were both in the right, the plague is begun!' He appeared in the greatest consternation, and his sister had much to do to keep him from swooning. His heart, as he said afterwards, was sunk within him; his thoughts all in confusion; and the affairs both of body and soul lay heavy upon him.—His sister received the news he brought without any fright or

surprise; but, with a calm mind, stood still a while, and as it were musing to bring herself to a settled frame, while her brother went on with his exclamations. At length, lifting up her eyes and hands, she said, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!* and immediately she applied herself to relieve her brother, and get something for him to take to restore his spirits, comforting him with her words as well as her actions.

"He was not so overwhelmed, but that he could perceive the surprising manner in which his sister, though so young, received the news; and how free she was from any oppression or sinking of her spirits: how it did not discompose her so as to hinder her concern for him: and when he came a little to himself he said aloud, 'O sister! you are happy, that took the early counsel of our dear mother! With what a different courage does a prepared mind receive the impressions of the most dreadful events, from one that, being care-

less and negligent in these things, as I have been, entertains the first thoughts about them not till they are just upon him!'

'Dear brother,' said she, 'do not talk so of me: my preparations are poor empty things: I have no preparations but these few, an imperfect repentance, and a humble resolution to cast myself upon infinite mercy: and I hope you have gone beyond me in all these, for you have more knowledge, more years, more experience, and more faith too, than I have, or else it is but very weak.'

'You are happy, child, let the judgment come when it will,' said her brother: 'but I have all my work to do. I have had more years and more knowledge, you say; and I must add that I have more work to do, more talents to account for, more misspent time to answer for; and I have made no preparation for this surprising condition we are all likely to be in; you know I despised it all.'

"She had besides this discourse enquired

of him how things were, and how he understood that, as he said, the plague was begun. He gave her an account that there had been two men buried in St. Giles's in the Fields: that it was true there were but two put into the weekly bill, but that he was assured there were two or three houses infected, and that five people were dead in one, and seven in another; and that the number of burials in St. Giles's parish, which used to be about 16 or 18 at most, was now increased to 30; which indicated strongly that the increase was by the plague, though they concealed it, and put them in of other distempers.

"This was a terrifying account, and he was exceedingly affected with it himself, as you see. As for the young lady his sister, who had long used herself to the thoughts of these things; who expected it to be as it happened; and who, from her mother's discourse, having for some months looked upon the distemper as begun, had seriously applied herself to the great work of prepa-

ration for death, and was come to that happy state of being entirely resigned to the disposal of heaven; this being her case, she was far less surprised with it than her brother, and stood, as it were, ready to submit to the will of God, in whatever way it should please him to deal with her. And thus she abundantly made good the principle her mother had urged, namely, that to speak of the plague beforehand as in view, and to make preparations for it as a thing certain, was so far from being a needless alarm to the people, and frightening and terrifying them, that it was the only way to preserve them from being frighted and terrified at it, when it really came upon them; and was the only way to keep the public peace, as her brother called it, by keeping the people composed and free from the confusions and tumultuous hurries which they are otherwise apt to fall into on such occasions.

"But the scene was not as it were yet spread, or the tragedy begun: there was

another prelude to appear, even in the narrow compass of this one family. O may it not be the case of many among us, upon the present view of things of the like kind! —When the first disorders of this occasion were a little abated, and this gentleman had come a little more to himself, things took a new turn with him. He was occupied in his business during the day, and in company in the evenings; but in the morning he had always a little conversation with his sister, and she soon observed, after the first two or three days, in which he continued much affected with the danger they were all in, and with his own unprepared condition also, as he owned it to be; that he dropt the discourse by little and little; till at last he said nothing at all of it to her for three or four days. Upon this, one morning as they were talking together, she broke in upon him with it thus: 'Dear brother, you tell me no news now, nor how we stand as to this terrible stroke that is coming upon us. I cannot but be very much

concerned to hear what condition we are in. Pray how does it go on?'

'God be praised,' said he, 'the distemper is stopped again: they say it was only a violent fever that seized one or two families: and the people have been in such a fright about it by the rashness of some old women, who set up a cry of the plague, that it has put all the town in an uproar. But it is stopped: and I saw from the weekly bill to-day that the number of burials in St. Giles's is decreased again, and none of the plague or fever more than usual.'

S. I am glad to hear it, brother: I wish it may hold.

B. I hope it will, sister. Come, do not be like my mother.

S. I wish I could be like my mother.

B. Ay, but do not be like her in this; do not be always foreboding.

S. Dear brother, I forbode to nobody but myself. I do not take upon me to teach you, or say any thing but just what you ask me.

B. Well, but do not forbode to yourself, sister: why, you will bring yourself to mope, and be dull upon it, till you come to have the vapours, and be half-mad.

S. I hope not, brother. I do not think so disconsolately upon it: I hope I am in the hands of God, and it is my mercy that I am so: I only want more strength to bring my faith to an entire dependence upon him.

B. But still you go on upon the old story, that the distemper will certainly come upon us.

S. Nay, I cannot but say I expect it as certainly as if it were here just now: *that* I cannot go from.

B. No, no, I hope not: come, God may be better to us than our fears allow us to suggest: it may go off.

S. Then I hope I shall be thankful: but ——

B. *But*, what? prithee, girl, do not be always prophesying evil, or ringing knells over us before we are dead.

S. Oh dear! how can you talk so, brother? I prophesy nothing; I do not pretend to it, but the thing fortells itself: God has given us notice of it several times, and as good as bid us expect it. Shall I be so blind, and not take the warning? God forbid! Indeed, brother, I cannot help believing that it will certainly come still.

B. Well, and is not this, as I say, prophesying evil?

S. No, brother, it is not; because I do not trouble any body with my talk. I should not have said thus much to you, but that you extort it. These are notices to myself only.

B. But I would have you to be encouraged, and to encourage us all: you are our Governess, and when you are dull and melancholy all the family will be so.

S. I am not dull and melancholy: but sure, brother, this is not a time to be thoughtless: nobody can be so that has any common sense. You were alarmed

enough yourself but a week ago: and I do not think you have lost those just impressions it made upon you then, though you are not willing they should be seen so plainly as they were at that time.

B. It was all without reason, I verily think. I see it was all nothing but the fright of old women, and of foolish people, worse than old women, that raised the tumult all over the city.

S. Well, brother, if it prove so it will be well: but I am sorry to see you cool so fast upon it, before you are sure the danger is over.

B. Child, the danger cannot be said to be over, because it never was a real danger. As an alarm and fright, it never had a foundation, but in the imagination of a few foolish people, who have so long talked the town into expectation of the plague, that, like wild-fire, they take at the first touch, and away they run head-long with a story, as if they *would* have it be so: for fright and wishes equally impose upon people,

and make them believe any thing. When we either desire to have a thing, or are terribly afraid of it, we believe it at the first word; at the most distant rumour of it.

S. But you are not sure, brother, that you were imposed upon in this.

B. Yes, very sure, very sure: I am satisfied it was all a rumour, a mere noise; and there is nothing at all in it but what I tell you.

S. You do not know it of your own knowledge, brother.

B. I have not been up thither indeed; but, if you wish it, I will go to the very houses, and enquire into all the particulars; though I think I am very well informed how it is.

S. By no means, brother: I would not have you go for a thousand pounds.

B. I do not think there is any danger in it at all; I would not value going thither a farthing: the people that were sick are either in their graves, or well again, and all is over.

S. Well, brother, I can say nothing to it: you know those things better than I. However, as you have no occasion to go thither, do not talk of that, I entreat you.

B. There is no occasion indeed, for I am satisfied of the thing, and so is the whole city in general.

S. Well, God fit us for all his will, and grant we may be prepared to meet him, with a due submission to all his providences, of what kind soever!

B. You are mighty solemn, child, about it: it is strange you cannot be satisfied as other people are. Why, your fright might be over by this time one would think; it is almost a fortnight ago.

S. Dear brother, I hope I should not be frighted if it were already come: but I desire to be seriously looking up to heaven for needful courage against the time; for I am fully persuaded it is not far off.

B. Well, I see you will not be beaten off from it: you will be prophetic: but if it were to be so, child, we cannot put it off:

to what purpose should we anticipate our sorrow, and be mourning about it whether it comes or not?

S. O brother, let us remember my mother's words; when it is upon us, it will be no time to make our preparations. The weight will then be too heavy; the warning too short. The plague is not a thing that gives warning then, or that gives time for repentance: now is the time for preparation.

B. I hope, my dear, you are thoroughly prepared for it: and therefore do not be dejected, do not be so melancholy. I tell you, child, you must encourage us all.

S. No, no, brother: I dare not say I am prepared, and therefore I have cause to be melancholy, as you call it: I have done nothing and can do nothing but fly to the arms of mercy. Alas! my preparations are poor mean things: you, brother, are better prepared than I, to be sure; or else you could not have so much courage.

" Here her brother stood mute through

his convictions of his own situation—so different from what his sister had described. She in consequence proceeded: 'It is a good thing, brother, to have so much temper in a case of this moment: I wish I had more courage.' He replied: 'Well, we will talk of that another time:' and retired, overcome by the reflections which pressed upon him.

"Well, said he to himself, this poor child has more religion, ay, and more wisdom too, than all of us. In short she is seriously preparing for the visitation if it should come; and, while I reproach her with being frighted, it is evident I was more frighted than she was, when the alarm of its having broken out last week at St. Giles's ran among us. And should it really come upon us I know not what to say: her words are very true, it will be no time for preparation then.

"The same day in the evening, being in the counting-house with his brother, he began to talk with him a little about it,

Brother, said he, I cannot help having some dull thoughts in my head sometimes, about this talk that is so public, that we are likely to have the plague among us this summer.

2*d*. *B*. Some dull thoughts, do you say? I assure you I am almost distracted about it.

1*st*. *B*. It would put our business all into confusion, if it should come.

2*d*. *B*. Into confusion! nay, it would ruin us all.

1*st*. *B*. No, I hope it would not ruin us, either.

2*d*. *B*. It would ruin me, I am sure: my very heart sinks within me when I speak of it.

1*st*. *B*. What do you mean? Why, you are worse than our governess.

2*d*. *B*. She, poor child! she is in the best case of us all: she is safe, come or not come. I wish I were in her condition, then I could have courage enough.

1*st*. *B*. You mean as to the religious

part, I suppose. Indeed she is a serious dear child: I have had a long discourse with her about it, and she talks like an angel.

2*d*. *B*. She has been preparing for this calamity a great while. she is happy. But who can say they have done as she has done?

1*st*. *B*. But, hark ye: you talk as she does in one part, as if you were sure we should have it among us: I hope the danger is over.

2*d*. *B*. Over! how can you talk so? I wonder you can be so secure.

1*st*. *B*. Why, what have you heard about it to-day?

2*d*. *B*. Nay, I have heard nothing to-day; but you know how it is, as well as I.

1*st*. *B*. I know there were none in the last week's bill, of the plague; and I am told there will be none in this.

2*d*. *B*. As to the bills, I wonder you should lay any stress upon what they say.

You know well enough they are managed, not to put them in openly of the plague. Private people get their dead put in of other distempers, that their houses may not be marked, or ordered to be shut up. They bribe the searchers and parish officers: and on the other hand the public themselves are not willing to have the town disquieted. It would make a terrible alarm all over the world, you know: the ships would every where be denied product: and it would ruin trade at home and abroad. But, alas! that is a trifle to what I talk of.

1*st. B.* Why you talk as if it was not over indeed! Is it really your opinion then that it is not over?

2*d. B.* My opinion! ay, and every body's opinion too, besides mine.

1*st. B.* Why, by your discourse, it is really begun.

2*d. B.* Depend upon it it is more than begun, it has spread every way into several streets in St. Giles's; and they will not be able to conceal it long.

1*st. B.* You are enough to put the whole town in a fright, brother! Why, you are as bad as my sister, the governess.

2*d. B.* Would I were as good as my sister! But what do you mean by being as bad as she is? She is frightened at it then, I suppose, as I am.

1*st. B.* Why truly I do not know whether she is or not; for, when I came, about a fortnight ago, and told her the plague was begun, as you know we all heard it was, she received the news with such a composure of mind, as I confess I wondered at; and, after a considerable time of silence, answered only that it was the hand of God, and He ought to do with us as pleases Him.

2*d. B.* *That* was like her, indeed: but do not say *I* am like her: I do not pretend to it, I assure you: I am all horror and confusion at the prospect before us.

1*st. B.* I do not say you are like her in that respect: indeed I do not know it: but you are like her in this, she is for

alarming every body, as if the plague were actually among us, when she knows nothing of it: and so are you.

2*d*. *B*. Well, but hark ye, brother; have a care of being in a worse extreme; for you seem to be lulling yourself asleep, when you know the flame is kindled.

1*st*. *B*. Do I know it is kindled? Do not say so: I hope it is not.

2*d*. *B*. You cannot seriously say you hope it is not: you may say, as I do, that you *wish* it were not; but you cannot but know it is actually begun; ay, and more than begun, it has spread a great way already, and in a very few weeks will be all over the city.

1*st*. *B*. You make my blood run chill in my veins: what do you mean? I cannot say I know it; I was really of the opinion that it was stopped again, and that the danger was over, at least for the present.

2*d*. *B*. And so your first apprehensions cooled again, I perceive.

1*st*. *B*. That was too much my case, I confess.

2*d*. *B*. And it was mine too, after the first appearance of it at Christmas last. I have been just like a sick-bed penitent; as soon as the fear was over, the penitence cooled and abated. But I feel the return with a double reproach upon me; I think it will sink me before the distemper comes.

1*st*. *B*. Well, but do not be so positive: I hope you are not so sure of the bad news as you make yourself.[1]

2*d*. *B*. Dear brother, why you and I know how these things are abroad. Do not you remember how the plague at Messina came creeping on just when we left the city, and went away again two or three times; but, as soon as the sun advanced, and they got into May, it broke out like a fire that had been smothered with hot ashes; and what havoc it made? And the like at Gallipoli, and on the Calabrian

[1] Still clinging to the forlorn hope: instead of seeking better grounded encouragement.

coast? Depend upon it, the distemper is is only smothered with these northerly winds; but, as soon as the winds become westerly, and the weather is a little close and warm, you will see dreadful work here. I do not speak to alarm you, but we should not be blind to our own danger.

"This discourse ended here for the present: but the very next day, which was the third or fourth of May, the youngest brother having been out in the morning, and coming into the counting-house, where his brother was, wished very much to give vent to his thoughts. He accordingly desired one of their servants, who was there, to withdraw; and, shutting the door after him, his brother was just going to open the door again to go out too, but he said, Do not go out, brother: I want to speak with you. So his brother sat down, and, seeing him look a little disordered, said, What is the matter, brother? have you heard any bad news?

2*d*. *B*. Ay, ay, bad news enough: we are all undone at last.

1*st*. *B*. What is it? What, do you hear any more of the plague?

2*d*. *B*. Any more of it! why it is come into the city. There is one dead in the next street to us almost—in Bearbinder Lane.

1*st*. *B*. What, of the plague itself?

2*d*. *B*. Ay, indeed: my Lord Mayor sent two surgeons to examine the body, and they have both given it in that he died of the plague: he was a Frenchman. I told you how it would be.

1*st*. *B*. Well, but this may be some straggling loose fellow, that has come down from St. Giles's for fear of it, because it was there about a fortnight ago.

2*d*. *B*. Do not let us flatter ourselves any longer, brother, or trifle with heaven: it has spread at the other end of the town into the Strand, and from thence into Holborn. You will see, in two or three weeks more, what dreadful havoc it will make.

1*st*. *B*. What shall we do brother? What will become of us all? and what will become of the business?

2*d*. *B*. Nay, what will become of our souls? I am undone, if I stay here; I will go over to France.

1*st B*. Alas! it is too late for that, brother: before you can get thither all their ports will be locked up; they will not let a vessel from England come near them, you may be sure.

2*d*. *B*. I am sure it is too late for something else; I have mocked God with that part once already.

1*st*. *B*. You are enough to terrify one to death: let us see a little about us, before we talk thus.

2*d*. *B*. O brother, you do by the danger as I have done by my preparations; put it off as long as you can. You talk of seeing about us; why you will see in a very few days the plague will be about us, and no room to escape from it. I warrant you, if you go but as far as the Exchange, you

will see people preparing to get out of this dreadful city as fast as they can, and all trade in a kind of stagnation: and it is time indeed it should be so.

1*st*. *B*. I do not see that we can go out of it, at least not I; unless I give up all our business, and leave every thing to be ruined, and to be a booty to the next comer.

2*d*. *B*. I am sure if I stay here I shall look on myself as a dead man.

1*st*. *B*. I hope not, brother; all do not perish in the worst plague. Though the plague were to come, sure it would leave some of us behind.

2*d*. *B*. But I have no reason to expect that I should be kept.

1*st*. *B*. Why not? I hope you will: do not be frighted.

2*d*. *B*. Oh I have mocked God, I say, with my former preparations. When I was justly alarmed, I pretended repentance and reformation; but when the fright was over, and we flattered ourselves that the

destroying angel had passed, I cooled and abated in my warmth, and became the same loose wicked fellow I was before. I have broken all my vows and resolutions, and dropped my preparations; and how can I go about the same work again now?

1*st*. *B*. I hope it will not be too late: you talk like a distracted man: why it is never too late to call upon God for mercy.

2*d*. *B*. No, but it may be too late to *obtain* it. Besides, when the distemper comes amongst us, what time, what temper, what power to look up? What capacity to look inward? What calling upon God in the agonies of a plague swelling, or in the distraction of the fever? It is too late, brother; it should have been done before. I am almost distracted already with the thoughts of it.

1*st*. *B*. You will distract yourself and me too at this rate: why, what must be done?

2*d*. *B*. I may well say, Lord be merciful to me! for I am at my wits' ends, and know

not what to do. I wish you would let us shut up the counting house, and be gone.

1*st. B.* Be gone! whither shall we go?

2*d. B.* Nay, any where: I am sure I shall never be able to stand it; my very heart dies within me at the apprehensions and fright of it.

1*st. B.* But you must endeavour to rouse up your spirits, and not be cast down.

2*d. B.* Oh brother, whose heart can endure, or whose hands be strong, in the day that God shall deal with him? God is now taking us all into his own hands; we shall no more be able to trifle with him; repenting, and going back, and repenting again, and going back again. Oh it is dreadful work to make a jest of our repentance as I have done!

1*st. B.* I beseech you, brother, compose yourself: you will die with the fright indeed, at this rate. Come, I will go out and see what I can learn of it, and what measures are to be taken.

"Thus this discourse ended also, and

the elder brother went out into the city, and he found it to be all true as his brother had said; that the plague had now spread into several parishes at the other end of the town, and that there were, in particular, in the old place five or six families infected, that is, at St. Giles's near Long Acre, and about the north end of Drury Lane. Also it had spread down Drury Lane into St. Clement's parish, and the other way into St. Andrew's, Holborn; so that it apparently went forward towards the city: and the next weekly bill had nine persons put in of the plague, besides those that were concealed.

"The elder brother came home in the evening, and, as he found all that his brother had said was true, he was very anxious about it, though he did not discover it so much as his brother. In short the whole house was very melancholy. It is true, the younger brother's melancholy was different from the rest, being attended with a sadness of a peculiar kind; I mean the great con-

cern he was under for his future state. He had several conversations with his elder brother, which chiefly turned upon the measures that they were to take to preserve themselves, and to put their business in a posture to receive as little damage as possible, by so general an interruption as it was likely to meet with: but he did not receive any manner of satisfaction or comfort from him, in the particular thing that afflicted him; and, continuing very disconsolate, his pious sister, who was greatly concerned for him, one day, about ten days after the first conversation with his brother, came into his chamber, where he was sitting very pensive and heavy, and began to comfort him.

S. Dear brother, she said, I am very sorry to see you in this melancholy, discouraged condition: what can I do for you? It is a sad time with us all.

B. Poor child, he answered, thou canst do nothing for me, but pray for me: do that, child, however.

S. I pray for you, brother! *That* I do always: but what am *I*, that you should ask me to pray for you? Shall I send for some good minister to pray with you, and for you, and to comfort you? *that* may be of some use to you.

B. No no: come sit down here, thou art a good comforter enough to me. Tell me, my dear, what upholds your mind in this dismal time; for you have the most courage, and the most composure of mind, they say, of the whole family.

S. No, no, you are quite wrong; my brother outdoes us all: he is like one above it all, that lives unshaken with any apprehensions whatever: he has a strong faith. O that I had a heart so prepared, so steady, so unconcerned as he has!

B. Sister, sister, you mistake the point: my brother puts the evil day far from him; buoys himself up with hopes that the judgment will pass over; and that it is not so near or so certain, as we have all reason to see it is: and he flatters himself with this,

or with escaping it if it comes: I tell you he has no more courage than other people: but I think he is stupid. . . . He knows nothing of that happy condition you speak of, nor I neither: you are in a better state than any of us.

S. Dear brother, do not say so of me: you grieve me extremely. I that am the worst creature alive, what state can I be in? I hope too you are wrong in the case of my brother and yourself.

B. This is not a time, sister, to flatter or compliment: the judgments of God are coming upon us: what must be done? What is our work? What is our duty?

S. We talk of preparations, and some preach up early preparations: I know nothing we can do, but learn to die at the feet of Christ, as miserable penitents, this is all I can come to.[1]

B. Oh sister, if I could do that, I should think myself safe.

[1] Here the reader will find the more favourable construction justified, which was put on the defective or objectionable language of p. 79, 80.

S. He will accept all that come unto God by him.

B. But I should have come before: to talk of it now is nothing; we cannot now be said to *come*, we are *driven*.

S. That is true; but so his goodness is pleased to act with us, that he will accept those who are persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, as well as those who are drawn by his love.

B. There is no sincerity in coming now.

S. I hope there is, brother.

B. It is hard work to repent under distress; and it is hard to be satisfied of our own sincerity under such circumstances. How shall *I* prepare now, that have not gone about it till the judgments of God are upon us; and I am driven to it, as it were, in the terrors of death?

S. Do not discourage *me*, brother, while you discourage yourself. The judgment of God is begun, and we are to prepare for it; that is to say, to be ready to meet him with our souls prostrate at his feet. We are to

say, *It is the Lord, let him do* with us *what seemeth him good.* And this is a work proper to go about, even now: I am sure I must go about it now as well as you. I entreat you do not discourage me; I want all the helps to it possible.

B. I do not discourage *you*, sister: you have been before-hand with the work; you have led a life of preparation a great while; *I* have lost all the time past, and that doubles the work for the time to come.

S. I have done nothing, and can do nothing; neither can any of us do any thing, but submit and be resigned.

B. We must submit and be resigned as to God's disposing of us; but I speak of another work, sister, that lies hard and heavy upon my spirits. I have a long misspent life to look back upon: I have an ocean of crimes to launch through, a weight that sinks the soul, and, without God's infinite mercy, will sink it for ever. What is resigning to God's disposal to this? No man can resign to be eternally lost; no

man can say he submits to be rejected of God. I could cheerfully submit to whatever it pleases God to do with me here, whether to die or to live; but I must be pardoned, sin must be done away, or I am lost and undone: it cannot be said I can resign that point.[1]

S. No, brother, I did not mean so: we must resign our bodies, but we are allowed to be humbly importunate for the pardon of our sins, the sanctifying of our hearts, and the saving of our souls: and then we shall do the other with cheerfulness and satisfaction.

B. Well, sister, now you come to my case. This pardon is not to be obtained but upon a sincere repentance, and a firm faith in Christ; and this the work, I say,

[1] Well indeed is it when the solemn sense of eternity, of the worth of the soul, of the evil of sin, and of danger by sin, thus presses on the mind. It proceeds from the Spirit of God, amid whatever remaining darkness it may exist; and it may be expected, therefore, to have a happy issue. O how widely does it differ from the natural insensibility to such subjects which commonly prevails!

I have still to do, and that you have not neglected as I have done.[1]

S. Oh, brother, I have done little; *I* have it every day to do, as well as you; and it is a work that must be renewed every day: I desire to be every day applying to it with all my power, and I hope you do so too; for we make fresh work for repentance every day.[2]

[1] All this *is* "a work," and a most serious and important work, calling for the greatest pains and diligence. Faith itself is a "work," or an act and operation of the mind; (John vi. 27—29;) though it is not *as a work* of ours that it saves us, but simply as connecting us with Christ, giving us an interest in him, by whose merits and grace alone we are saved. Nor are we left to perform these important works by our own power: much less, when we do perform them are we to bring them as an offering to God, to procure us the further blessings which we need. No; they are his gifts to us, his works in us, though we have duties to perform respecting them. "A new heart will I give you;" "I will take away the heart of stone, and give you the heart of flesh." Repentance is his gift; Faith is his gift; though we are to exercise both one and the other; and though the exercise of them leads the way, and is requisite, to the attainment of other gifts consequent upon these. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, &c.; Acts v. 31; Eph. ii. 8, &c.

[2] This is all true; but let it still be borne constantly in mind, that "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth"—daily, hourly, cleanseth—"from all sin," all them who thus "come

B. It is a dreadful work to have to do at such a time as this.

S. But, brother, though the having deferred our repentance to the last gasp, be a discouraging thing; and that, as you say, a sick-bed, or the time of visitation, is not a time for it; yet, blessed be God, it is not forbidden then: these said circumstances do not make our repentance unlawful; they only unfit us for it. Neither does repenting at last make our repentance insincere, (as you seem to imply,) though it may, indeed, render it suspected to ourselves.

B. It takes away all the comfort of repentance; that I am sure of; and much of the hope of it, too.

S. But not to go about it at all is still worse, brother.

B. I know not what to go about, or when to go about it.

to God by him;" that, though there is much remaining, but not indulged, sinfulness, yet "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." 1 John i. 7; Rom. viii. 1.

S. I hope you know, brother, both what to do, and when.

B. The time is lapsed: death is at the door; what can be done now? It is not what our particular frame or temper may be just now, but what the main course and tenor of life have been: we are to be *judged according to our works.*[1]

[1] Here again is another important truth introduced, which is often misapprehended and misapplied. All shall, at last, be "judged according to their works." The impenitent sinner shall be judged and condemned both *according to*, and *for*, his works, of which his "not believing in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" is the crime that consummates his guilt, and seals his condemnation. (John iii. 18.) The believer in Christ, though neither at first, nor at last, justified *for* his works, shall yet be judged *according to* them; that is, 'the course and tenor of his life,' *from the time of his truly believing in Christ*, will be the evidence and proof that his was a living faith, and not a mere profession; and that, consequently, he was "in Christ," and justified through him. And, this being the case, all the sins of his previous life, as well as all the evils and imperfections which he had to lament to the end of his days, "shall not be mentioned unto him;" they are "cast into the depths of the sea;" they shall "no more be found." Rom. ii. 5—11. 2 Cor. v. 10. Rev. xx. 13. John v. 28, 29. Matt. xxv. 31—46.—Rom. iii. 24. v. 1, 2, 9. viii. 1. 1 John i. 7. ii. 1, 2. Jer. l. 20. Ezek. xviii. 22. xxxiii. 16. Mic. vii. 19.

S. It is true; the evil, I judge, is at hand, though I know nothing how it is. My brother told me the plague had ceased again, and all was over. But I lay no stress upon that; I desire to be always as I should be, if it were upon me in particular.

B. Indeed it is far from being over; it is increasing every day. It has got into three or four parishes at the other end of the town, and it spreads this way apace.

S. Well, brother, it is a loud call upon us to improve the few days we have left.

B. I resolve not to lose a moment, but to apply the time that remains as much as possible. But, alas! what can I do? Is it not all a mere force, a fright? If the sickness should go off, I shall be just the same again.

S. You pass sentence upon yourself too rashly, brother. You are no more sure you shall do so, than you are sure you shall go to heaven.

B. I have a sad rule to judge by. I

have done so once already, when we had the same apprehensions five months ago; and what less can I infer? I shall be just the same man again: for this is all the same thing. It is being driven into a harbour by a storm: as soon as the storm is over, the ship puts to sea again, and goes on the same voyage she was going before, and steers the same course she steered before; and so shall I. I am only driven to my knees by the storm.[1]

S. I hope not, brother. You know the story of the Prodigal: he was driven by evident misery and starving—as bad a storm as any man can be driven by. He tells you, *I perish for hunger:* he never thought of

[1] We have here principally pourtrayed to us the additional anxiety which, in such circumstances, the mind treasures up to itself, that has not only put off repentance, but turned back again to a life of negligence and sin, after having seemed to repent and turn to God. Let it be a warning to all against such a course; and let us remember, that the only preservative from it is calling upon God, without ceasing, that he would "create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us." (Ps. li. 9, 10.) Nothing short of this thorough change will be permanent.

returning to his father, till he was ready to perish; that is, just at the gate of destruction.

B. That is but a parable, sister.

S. But remember, brother, what the moral of it was; what the design of the story; and, above all, who told it.

B. That is true; but what is that moral to my case?

S. Why, brother, he that told that story, with his own mouth, is the same father who is to accept of us prodigals; and, I think, he clearly tells us there, that he will receive us, however late, and by whatever necessity or distress we are driven, if we truly turn to him. What else did he tell us that story for?

B. That is a comforting application of it indeed; and I think it will hold.

S. I hope it is a true application of it, brother. I am glad it seems to be seasonable to your case.

B. It is so seasonable to me, that nothing can be more so. Dear sister, you

are a healing preacher to me: that very case is my case; and, as you say, our blessed Lord gives a plain call in it to every distressed prodigal, to come back when he is ready to perish.

S. I am no preacher, brother; I am but a girl, a child, in these things; but the story of the Prodigal came into my mind just then: I hope you are no prodigal.

B. Yes, yes, I am a prodigal; I have wasted the substance that I had given me; the time and talents of health and strength that have been spared me; and now I am just like him, ready to perish. Death is at the door. If this passage came into your mind, as you say, without any forethought, it was God's goodness that put it into your thoughts: it was spoken for me; I will observe it; I will return to my Father, and say, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, make me as one of thy hired servants.*

S. Blessed be God for the encouragement you have from it! I desire to make

the same use of it myself.[1]—But here is my brother: I hear him ring at the door.

B. Well, then, we shall have some further account of things; dreadful news, I do not question.

S. Well, brother, you have been at the Exchange, I hear; what news have you? how do things go on?

1*st. B.* Truly I know not what to say; it is bad enough: but it is not worse than it was; at least they tell us so. I have the account that will be in to-morrow's weekly bill; it was brought to my Lord Mayor, as it seems was ordered every week before it was printed.

2*d. B.* What! that is, I suppose, that

[1] We have arrived now at a beautiful and affecting part of the narrative. We begin to see the sight over which "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God"—the sinner coming to repentance. Here are the beginnings, the happy beginnings, of both repentance and faith. Blessed is the case when the word of God thus comes home to the mind "with power," and when well-known passages impress it in a new manner, and in their application to itself. We must say, This is the finger of God! It is from the Holy Ghost! 1 Thess. i. 5. ii. 13.

the number may not be made too large in the article of the plague. They may do what they will, but the people will know these things; and, if they see any tricks used with them, they will think the worse of it.

1*st. B.* How can you suggest such a thing, brother? there is no room for it; the number is known, and every body is allowed to see it.

S. And pray how many is it, brother?

1*st. B.* Why the whole number is but seventeen: and there were fourteen last week; so that the increase is but three, which is no great matter; and it is all at that end of the town.

2*d. B.* Mark, now, how partial my brother is in his relation: he says there are but seventeen of the plague; but pray how many are there of the spotted fever?

1*st. B.* Truly there are a good number of that distemper; I think twenty-three.

2*d. B.* That is part of the cheat I told you of: people conceal the distemper as

much as they can, that their customers may not shun their shops: and so they put them in of the spotted fever, or any thing they can get the searchers to return, when the deaths are really of the plague.

1*st*. *B*. I can say nothing to that; I take things always for true when authority publishes them.

2*d*. *B*. I am for being imposed upon by nobody; especially in a case that so nearly touches my life as this does.

S. I think there is not much in it either way: it is plain the plague is begun, and spreads apace: and it is not much to the purpose how many it increases this week or next: the case will be decided in three or four weeks more, beyond all cavil.

2*d*. *B*. Nay, as it is, we see it spreads apace this way.

1*st*. *B*. But it is not yet come into the city, except that one man who died in Bearbinder Lane a month ago.

S. Another month or two, brother, will

shew us quite a different face of things; and instead of seventeen or twenty, you will see a thousand a week, perhaps more.

1*st. B.* God forbid! Sister, I beseech you do not prophesy evil tidings.

2*d. B.* Brother, I beseech you do not flatter yourself: will you never be alarmed? Do you consider the numbers of people that there are in such a city as this? My sister talks of a thousand a week: if it comes to be a thorough infection there may be five times so many die in a week, and the whole town be a mere Pesthouse and a desolation.

S. My brother sees us discouraged, and it is only that he is not willing to have us too much frighted: but a few weeks will put us all out of doubt.

1*st. B.* I do not either alarm you, or endeavour to make you secure; but I see you are both resolved to have it be thought *worse* than it is, and I am for having it called nothing but *what* it is. *So many* have died of it last week; and as many

more have died of several particular distempers: it is time enough to be frighted and hurried, when we see it come upon us: I am not for making things worse than they are.

2*d*. *B*. Well, brother, that is a good way of talking enough, to them that are ready and prepared for the worst, as my sister says you are; and I am glad to hear that you are. But the more unhappy it is for me: for my work is yet to do. I have different reasons for being more alarmed than you, for I am utterly unprepared for it, God knows!

S. Ay, and I too.

1*st*. *B*. You are enough to terrify any one to death, both of you: if you are unprepared, you must go and prepare then, if you think fit: for my part I cannot bear to hear you talk thus.—*He goes out.*

S. Brother, let us take the hint, and set about the work.

B. Oh, sister, is it in any one's power to prepare himself for such a terrible time

as this? How is it to be done? and what can we do?

S. *The preparation of the heart is of the Lord.* Prov. xvi. 1.

B. We talk of preparations as if there was a stated settled form of preparing for the plague, which being performed we were ready for it whenever it came: for my part, I know no preparation for the plague, but a preparation for death: he that is ready to die is ready to have the plague.

S. I understand it so exactly.

B. Why then, dear sister, you are entirely of my mind. Will you then join with me, and let us set upon the great work, as well together as apart. Let us lay our account for death: that is, settle it with ourselves that we shall die of this visitation; and endeavour to bring our souls to such a frame, as that we may with cheerfulness throw ourselves into the arms of divine mercy, through the merit of Jesus Christ, whenever he shall summon

us; be it by this dreadful visitation, or by what other providence he thinks fit.

S. I am very little able to forward you in such a work; but I will join in any thing that I am able, as well with respect to my own part, as to any thing else we can do together.

B. But what do you look upon to be the first work?

S. The first thing I can think of is a full resolution, a firm purpose of heart, to forsake all our sins, and to return heartily to God whom we have offended.

B. By returning to God, I suppose you understand repenting sincerely for all our past sins, mourning unfeignedly over them, and calling upon God for pardon and forgiveness.

S. I do so: and there is great encouragement for us to do this, in the Scriptures. *Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up.* —*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the*

unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon [1].

B. This is true: but how shall we do this? and who can effectually return to God? It is a hard work.

S. We must look up to him for assistance, even in this very work. *Turn thou us, O Lord, unto thee, and we shall be turned: renew our days as of old.—I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.—Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel* [2].

[1] Hos. vi. 1. Isa. lv. 7.
[2] Lam. v. 21. Jer. xxxi. 18. Ezek. xviii. 30—32.

B. There is another text which touches my very soul every time I read it: methinks it speaks to me: it is the very sort of turning that I think I want; and it seems to be even a direction to me how to turn, and what turning to God means in his own sense of it; how he is pleased to understand it, or what it is he will accept as a sincere turning to him. It is in Joel ii. 12, 13. *Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*

S. That is an extraordinary place indeed: I had omitted it, but I remember it very well, and the words of the verse before it seem to make the reason for that particular call, of turning to God, to be much the same with what is before us.

B. I did not look at that part: the

call was loud to me; and I see reason enough before me: it affected me indeed exceedingly.

S. But the words immediately before will add to it still: pray look here.

B. They are solemn indeed: ver. 11. *For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, who can abide it?* Ay, who can abide it?—Who indeed can abide it? It is *our* case just now: the judgment that is now coming upon us may well be said to be *the day of the Lord;* and it is *very terrible* indeed, none can be able *to abide it.*

S. The next words are ushered in with this as a reason for them, THEREFORE *turn unto the Lord with all your heart; with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.*

B. Dear sister, this is indeed our direction: let us obey the voice of our rule. This is a scripture rule, and we cannot be wrong in it.

S. Nay, they are the words of God himself; that is to say, the prophet speaks them as immediately from God, and in his

very name, *Therefore also now*, SAITH THE LORD: and the next words are as if God spoke immediately, *Turn ye even to* ME.

B. This is a call to us; to me, sister, in particular, and I have great reason thus to turn; and to do it in the particular manner directed—*with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.*

S. It is a call to me, as well as to you, brother: and I have as much reason to think it is directed particularly to me, as you can have, and more too, much more [1].

B. Dear sister, let us dispute that no longer: will you join with me in this work? shall we repent together, and humble our souls together?

S. Ay, brother, with all my heart: I will be thankful to you for so much help in such a work.

B. We have opportunity now to help and assist one another. God alone knows how long we may be continued together;

[1] Such will ever be the feelings of true penitence. 1 Tim. i. 15. Phil. ii. 3.

how long it may be before we may be snatched from one another, or both snatched away as it were together.

S. I rejoice at the motion, brother: I have had no helps before; I have been alone in all things of this nature. I bless God for the offer, and will join you in every thing that you desire of me, and, above all, in receiving help and counsel and assistance from you [1].

Here we can follow this happy couple no further at present, in their particular conversation: but it is to be recorded for the example and encouragement of others, in a like case, that they agreed to spend two hours every evening and an hour every morning in her closet, where they prayed together, read the Scriptures together, and

[1] And who shall say that the mutual concurrence of near relatives and dear friends—their combined effort to help one another in the greatest and best of all undertakings—is not reasonable, commendable, delightful, and a thing to be imitated?

discoursed together, as their particular circumstances made it seasonable. In these retirements the brother prayed, and made a daily confession of sin; the sister read the Scriptures; and in their discourses they were mutual. Beside this, they locked themselves up every Tuesday and Friday, and kept the whole day as a solemn fast, neither eating nor drinking till about four o'clock in the afternoon. And on these occasions it might be truly said of them both, that they *humbled themselves greatly before the Lord their God;* and, as the Scripture above-mentioned directed, they did it *with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.*

The young man in particular was a pattern for penitents; and in an especial manner he was afflicted, and continually reproached himself, for having put off his preparation and repentance formerly, till the very judgment was at the door; and for having been once before touched with a like sense of his danger, but growing cold

and unconcerned again, as the danger abated and went off. This robbed him much of the comfort of his present application; and he continually upbraided himself with it, as if it had been a test of his future insincerity: and it was very discouraging to him. He would also frequently observe on that head, how much all persons should guard against falling back from their own professions; how sad a token of hypocrisy it was to do so; and how hard it would be for those who had done so, if ever they came to be true penitents, to believe themselves such, or to receive the comfort of their own humiliations.[1]

In this distress of his mind he received great assistance from the comforting discourses and excellent example of his pious sister, who was now the companion of his

[1] This expression again may be thought by some exceptionable: but is obviously not meant that "our humiliations" are to be the basis of our acceptance or our confidence, but only the *proofs* that we are brought to that state of mind to which comfort is spoken. Ps. li. 17. Isa. lvii. 15. lxvi. 2. Matt. v. 3, &c.

best hours, and his support in his greatest discouragements. She had given the first life to his resolutions, by hinting to him that our blessed Saviour himself was the author of that parable of the Prodigal; and that, as it was said introductory to the parable of the unjust Judge, that *he spake a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;* so it might be said of the parable of the Prodigal, that he spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to return to God their Father, when they are in distress, and not to decline for its being late. She had upon all occasions repeated to him such encouraging texts of Scripture as occurred to her to support his resolutions; and she was daily searching the Bible for such texts as might be particularly adapted to these purposes.

It happened that under one of his greatest discouragements—most of which began at the doubts he had upon his mind of his own sincerity, and of his being

accepted, because of his not having applied himself to his humiliation till it pleased God to bring the terror of the plague upon him, and till the judgment was, as it were, at the door:[1] under one of the worst of these his dejections, his sister thought of another example. 'Come, brother,' said she, 'I have another Scripture instance for your encouragement, where God accepted one of the worst wretches that ever lived, and who never returned till he was brought to the greatest extremity. A greater instance of wickedness never was in the world: nor did he ever think of returning, that we read of,

[1] Two grounds of discouragement are here stated: 1. Doubts of his own sincerity: and 2. Distrust arising from the lateness of his repentance. The latter must be at once rejected, and dispelled by simply believing the abundant testimonies of the Gospel, that "he who cometh shall *in no wise* be cast out." The former are not without ground both from reason and scripture: they are not to be pronounced simply in themselves *unbelief*: on the contrary, they may be even increased by the belief of many scriptural cautions and warnings: but they must be removed by perseverance in coming to the Saviour, and in the use of such prayers as that of the Psalmist, "*Make my heart sound* in thy statutes, that I may never be ashamed."

till God struck him, and brought him down to the lowest degree of misery: and yet, upon his humbling himself, he was accepted. Will such an example comfort you?' 'I think,' he replied, 'you were born to comfort me; who was it?' 'Here it is,' said she; 'take it as it is recorded on purpose to encourage penitents under the worst circumstances. It is the story of Manasseh, the most wicked of all the kings of God's people, 2 Chron. xxxiii. In the beginning of the chapter, to the 7th verse, you have an account of his wickedness; such as the like was never in Jerusalem before him, in doing abominable things, profaning God's house and his altar, practising witchcraft and sorcery, and dealing with the devil. Also, verse 10, it is said, *The Lord spake to him, but he would not hearken*: so that he resisted even God himself, and rejected the gracious call of God to him to repent. This, brother, was much worse than what you call growing cold and negligent, and letting your sense

of things wear off.—Well, after this, verse 11; *Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.* This was *driving* him, as you call it, with a witness: he was pulled down from a throne to a dungeon; from a crown of gold and chains of gold, as ornaments, to chains of iron to fetter and bind him, as one kept for execution. But now see ver. 12, 13: *And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers; and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his own kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.* —Now, brother,' said she, 'what think you of all this?' Tears of joy ran down his face while she read the words of the two last verses; and, when she asked him at last what he thought of it; 'Think of it?'

said he, 'my dear sister! my happy comforter! I think I will never be discouraged more.' And he was in a great degree as good as his word; for he was exceedingly encouraged by it upon all occasions, and had recourse to that example, whenever his reflection upon his late repentance gave him any sad thoughts.

But he leaves it as a seasonable caution for *us*, upon whom the like circumstance of a national visitation seems to be coming, that our preparations may not be adjourned till the judgment is upon us; for, though it may not be ineffectual, through God's mercy, for any one to repent then, however late, yet it will rob us of great comfort, make the danger a thousand times more dreadful, and fill us always with dark and discouraging thoughts; and it will be very hard to bear up the mind under them. He warns all men by his example, that, when preparations for death have been long put off, it is so much the harder to begin them at all, and the heart, once hardened by

frequent delaying and putting it off, is not easily softened to the serious work again: and, if it shall at last be brought to go about it heartily, it will yet go with a heavy and afflicted mind; and those delays of repentance will be the most abhorred things, even equal to the sins that are to be repented of. And nothing is more certain, than that, when people put off those preparations to the last, God is often pleased to deny the gift of repentance in their extremity, or at least for a great while; and sometimes to withhold the comfort of it to the last gasp. But I proceed with the story of the family before me.

"These two happy penitents went on in this course for some time. Some short discourses which happened between them, could they have been entirely preserved, might have been very useful to others. The following however may not be unprofitable. The brother, it being during one of their private fasts, began thus:

B. Sister, we are under the apprehen-

sions of a terrible judgment, which is already begun, and increases dreadfully among us; pray let us state between us, what is our work upon that account at this time.

S. I believe I understand you, brother; you would have us state what we mean by *preparations;* for these are the things we talk much of, and others too, when they speak any way seriously. Indeed I have often asked myself, what I mean by *preparations for the plague*?

B. Well, and how did you answer your own question?

S. Why, I answered it as I heard you mention it once to my brother, and I thought you had given a very right account of it; namely, that preparations for the plague were preparations for death, and that they ought to be so understood.

B. Well, but the question is much the same still, namely, what is it to make preparations for death? or what preparations are proper to be made for death?

S. It is a hard question, brother, and requires a better head than mine to give an answer to it.

B. But, sister, that which is worse is, that the preparations I mean are to be supposed to be made by a man that has been a hardened, extravagant wretch, guilty of great crimes.

S. One that has been old in sin, and that has put off all the calls to repentance, whether proceeding from conscience or from nature, from reason or from religion, from God or from man.

B. Ay, just as I have done, sister.

S. No, no; not as you have done, but as you *say* you have done.

B. Well, let that rest: what must such an one do? what must his preparations be?

S. The first thing, brother, I can think of, is included in that scripture, Lam. iii. 40: *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord.*

B. The description is most apt to the purpose; *search and try our ways:* which,

as I understand it, is self-examination of the strictest, closest kind.

S. *Searching;* that is, a looking back upon our past life, and into every action of it; not hiding or dropping this search in any particular part that can be brought to memory; not covering any part, but searching ourselves to the bottom.

B. And then trying the quality of every action, bringing ourselves to the bar of our consciences, and there impartially subjecting every action of our lives to the judgment of reason and conscience; determining with an unbiassed sincerity, whether such ways and such actions are justifiable at the bar of God or not.

S. Blessed be God, there is a bar of conscience, at which we may arraign ourselves, and where, if we try the cause impartially, we may make a right judgment of our actions, and know in what posture we stand.

B. But, O sister, what is my case? I see before hand what is my case: I cannot

stand before the judgment-seat of my own heart, how then shall I appear at *His* tribunal, where all must appear in its true light.

S. Do not say this is *your* case, as if none were in that case but you. I am in the same condition: my own heart condemns me, and *God is greater than our hearts.* I have nothing to say but this, *Enter not into judgment with me, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* Psalm cxliii. 2.

B. If then we bring our actions faithfully to the bar of reason and conscience, we shall then see our state: we shall see what our condition is, and what it will be at the bar of God's judgment.

S. Certainly we may.

B. Then I must see, and do see, that at that bar I shall be condemned.

S. Yes, brother, and I too and every one; for *in his sight shall no man living be justified*, as his own actions, brought to this judgment, will appear. But let us go

back to the text again: *Let us search and try our ways:* what is next?

B. Blessed be God, it follows, *and turn again to the Lord.* This then is our work at this time.

S. Dear brother, our work, in short is self-examination and repentance: first examination, then humiliation.

B. It is plain first: *search and try our ways*, and then *turn* from them *to the Lord.* It is taken there as a conclusion, that, upon searching and trying our ways, we shall find they will not bear a trial, either at the bar of God or at the bar of conscience. Therefore we are to turn from them.

S. That is our next work: and how is that to be done?

B. That brings us to the other text, Joel ii. 12, 13. It must be *with all our hearts, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.* How shall we do this, sister?

S. Well, brother, but let us go on, and see the fruit of it too: read the next verse, 13: *And rend your heart, and not your*

garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

B. Nay, sister, go on with them, verse 14: *Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?* Here is encouragement, sister: let us set about this work, *for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.*[1]

"Here is one of their discourses, or at least a part of it: and herein may be seen something of that true work of preparation for the plague. Let none flatter themselves with *less* than this. They who pretend to be making preparations for the plague, that is to say, for death, any other way than by *searching and trying their ways, and turning to the Lord, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;* that is to say, with sincere humiliation and repentance; will

[1] Let the reader only suspend his judgment a little, and wait the result. Our author is himself sensible of the imperfect state in which the subject is here left. After a short time the deficiency will be supplied in a very gratifying manner.

but mock and deceive themselves, and will find they have made no preparations at all

I must leave this pious couple now a while, as to their retirements, and take them in common, in conversation with their brother and the family. The visitation came on; the plague spread dreadfully; death came like an armed man, and swept away the people like an overflowing stream. It was now five weeks after the last discourse between the two brothers and the sister, and since the two penitents had thus retired together, when the younger brother, having been out in the city, came in again and found his elder brother conversing with his sister. And now his manner of talking was quite changed: his tale was turned, as you shall see.

1*st*. *B*. O brother, why will you venture to go out?

2*d*. *B*. Out, why what can be done? we must go out for family necessaries.

1st. *B*. We have been greatly overseen

in that, not to have a store of provisions in the house, since we are obliged to stay: you know they did quite otherwise at Naples.

2*d. B.* That is true; but it is too late now.

1*st. B.* It is not too late for some things, however: we might get a stock of bread and beer into the house; and you see my mother sends us every week fresh provisions from the country, sufficient for ourselves, at least.

2*d. B.* She does just now, but it will not be long; no messenger or servant will dare to bring it a little time hence; the plague increases so much. The other end of the town is a mere desolation with it; it begins to come round us: I hear it is got over into Southwark this week, and six or eight have died on that side already.

1*st. B.* Well, what shall we resolve to do? Shall we venture to stay, or shall we lock up our doors and be gone? What say you, sister?

S. I am not fit to give my opinion: I see it is likely to be a dreadful time, but

what you resolve shall determine me; because, as I have undertaken the charge of your house, your measures make staying my duty or not my duty. So you are not to ask my opinion, but to direct me what to do.

1*st*. *B*. Well, but if you were not under the obligation you speak of, child, which you may be sure we would be far from tying you to in such a case as this, what would you do then?

S. Why then I should properly belong to my mother's family, and I ought to go thither, and then to act as she should direct.

2*d*. *B*. But, tell us what you think of doing now, child.

S. You may assure yourself I will do just as you do: I will live and die with you.

1*st*. *B*. This is all nothing: what we do we must do quickly, there is no time for long consultations. If we intend to go away, it must be speedily; or nobody will receive us: nay, we may carry the plague with us, and do ourselves more hurt than good.

2*d*. *B*. Nay, all the world almost, that have anywhere to go, are gone already. But have you thought of any place where to go?

1*st*. *B*. No, not I.

S. Why, brother, have you made no provision for the time of distress?

1*st*. *B*. No, not I, neither for soul nor body!—Here he sighed and wept: but proceeded: Indeed, sister, you have been in the right all along, and my mother too. I have put this evil day off, and flattered myself it would never come. I have seen such things frequently in Italy, and after the first frights the distemper has vanished again. I was indeed alarmed when I came to you there in April, but I found there were some people, who I thought made worse of it than they needed to do; and I dropt all concern about it. Nor have I suffered any impressions to be made on me since.

S. I took it otherwise, brother, and I always thought it was another way; that you were fortified by your extraordinary

experiences of God's goodness, and your faith in him: and *that* I knew was a good and justifiable foundation on which to be easy and settled in your mind.

1*st. B.* No, no: I am quite unprepared; and that with this aggravation, that I have neglected and slighted all the warnings of its approach: and now it comes on like an overflowing flood, nothing can stand in its way; we shall see the city in a very little time more a mere general grave for all its inhabitants.

2*d. B.* Not all, I hope, brother.

1*st. B.* Truly I believe there will very few remain of those that stay here: they that fly in time may indeed be preserved.

2*d. B.* Well, brother, we are all to be directed by you: what shall we do?

1*st. B.* Do? I have nothing to say to you but this, Do not follow my dreadful example, to put off repentance and preparation upon a wild presumption of escaping the danger; or indeed of its being more favourable than it is likely to be: lose not

an hour, not a moment: I have lost all my time, and now, heaven is just! I not only have no time for it, but I have no temper for it: when the danger is at the door there is no beginning the work; it is too late then.

2*d*. *B*. Compose your mind, brother, and look up to heaven for direction; and, if you think of going anywhere into the country for your safety, my sister and I will remain here to look to the house, and preserve things.

1*st*. *B*. No, brother, I will not go away for my own safety, and leave you exposed to the danger.

2*d*. *B*. I hope it may please God to preserve us; but if not, we are in the way of our duty, and may with the more cheerfulness cast ourselves into his arms.

1*st*. *B*. You talk very differently, brother, from your discourse a few months ago.

2*d*. *B*. I have had long experience of things since that; and particularly have felt the right He has to dispose of me and

all that belongs to me: it is my part to submit, it is his part to do whatsoever he pleases.

1*st*. *B*. I want such a spirit, brother: how did you get it?

2*d*. *B*. There is the dear instructor, that has been the healing angel to me.

S. I entreat you, brother, do not discourage yourself so; I have been capable of nothing, and have done nothing, neither can any of us do anything.

1*st*. *B*. Well, brother, you came in since I did, what do you hear of the main thing? what condition are we in?

2*d*. *B*. Worse and worse, the plague advances this way still, in a most surprising manner.

1*st*. *B*. Well, what shall we do?

2*d*. *B*. I scarcely know what.

1*st*. *B*. In short, there is hardly any body left in the city, but in by-places, and where people either have had no time to go, as has been our case, or have resolved to stay.

2*d*. *B*. Let us see a little further, brother: there are but very few dead in the city yet; I think not above fifty or sixty in all.

" This discourse being ended, the younger brother and sister began to consider that it would be their lot to stay in the city: but, being very anxious for their elder brother, they resolved to persuade him to go away, chiefly with respect to the confusion they found he was in about his eternal state. In the mean time, as they kept up their daily conferences and their fasts as before, they were every day more and more encouraged and comforted, being fully given up to the disposing will of heaven, let it be which way it would, whether for life or death.

" But to bring them to this gradually, we must go back to another of their discourses on this subject in one of their retirements. The brother began the conference upon the subject of the last discourse thus.

B. Dear sister, I thought we brought our last discourse to a very happy point: namely, That, after self-examination, *searching and trying our ways*, we should *turn to the Lord.* I have had some difficulties with myself upon this work of turning to God. We resolved it at our last meeting into repentance ; and I think that is plain in the text we were upon ; *turn with fasting and weeping and mourning.* This I take to be repentance: but is there nothing to do beside? Alas! we may weep and mourn, but, as that can make no compensation for our sin, we must look further.

S. It is very true there is more to be done ; but this scripture is plain even in that, for the words *turn to the Lord*, imply, in my judgment, flying to him for pardon. It is true, that the *manner* of applying to God for pardon of our sins is not expressed in the prophecy of Joel ; because they were then under the Old Testament dispensation.

B. That is what my thoughts resolved it into. But now, sister, I bring it to the New Testament; and I was directed, I hope, to that scripture, Acts xvi. 30, where the gaoler says, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* The very words were upon my mind before the particular scripture occurred to my thoughts, *What must I do to be saved?* and the answer is direct, v. 31: *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

S. It is most certain, brother, that to our repentance, which we have been called to by the text which we discoursed of last, must be joined the gospel direction of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ: and that is the next point for us to examine ourselves about.

B. It is plain, sister, from another text, Acts xx. 21: *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

S. Dear brother, if we have but these, our preparations are complete.

B. Then we may say, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!*

S. The next question then is to be assured on these two points.

B. Dear sister, I have nothing for it but the example of the man, in the gospel, Mark ix. 24, *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!* and this is the full exercise of my soul; this it is to which I desire to dedicate the whole remainder of my time, be it little or much, to obtain a settled dependence upon the merits and purchase of Christ the blessed Saviour of the world.

S. There is no other comfortable hope, no other rock, no anchor for the soul, but this: He is *the hope* of his people, and *their saviour in the time of trouble.*—This is a time of trouble: let us not be anxious, whether we are spared or not in this time of trouble; that faith, which has carried others through the fire and through the water, will carry us through the fire of a disease. What is it to die by this infectious fever, or, being spared a few years more,

to be carried away by another, or by any grievous distemper?

B. The difference is nothing, if it be not in things beyond the grave: for the difference of the time here is so little that it is not worth naming. At least when we come into that state we shall esteem it nothing.

S. Let us then neither wish nor fear in the present desolation, but be entirely resigned, giving up ourselves to him, who has said *he careth for us*, and has bid us *be careful for nothing*. This will be a comfortable state indeed.

B. Dear sister, I have been debating long with myself about the comfort of our faith, and about a comfortable dependence; and I have been long questioning whether ever I may arrive to the comfort of it or not; whether the *joy and peace of believing* may ever be my lot: and I have some reason to believe it will not:

S. I hope for you that it may: pray do not foreclose yourself.

B. I have such a weight upon me for a long series of folly and wickedness, that, the more I *search and try my ways*, the more I see reason *to turn to the Lord with weeping and with mourning*, and I believe I shall go so to my grave.

S. It may be so: but let me add, that it does not follow but you may go so to heaven; and then all those tears shall be wiped away from your eyes.

B. I have sometimes brought it to this conclusion, (and blessed be God for it,) that, though repentance and faith be absolutely necessary to our salvation, yet comfort and assurance are not: and then I remember the words of Job, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*

S. This faith is as effectual, though not so comfortable, as the other. This is my case: I know he is able to help and *to save to the uttermost*, and I desire to lie at his feet, and say, as the apostle did, Whither else shall we go?

B. If my faith will support itself thus

far, that I can lie down and die at his feet, I will not say it is all I can desire, but I do say it is all I can expect;[1] and it is just with him if he should deny me even that.

S. We cannot promise or propose to ourselves what we shall do when we come to the extremity. Dear brother, this is such a time of trial as we never had before; nor older people than we. It pleases God we are yet alive; but death is at the door, and we have reason to expect it every moment; and that a terrible death too: nothing can stand us in stead, but an entire dependence upon infinite mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

B. I propose nothing to myself, but to depend upon him, and to look to him for life; for *he is the Author of eternal salvation to all that believe on him*,[2] and I rest

[1] And more than might be *reasonably* expected: but yet less than may and ought to be confidently looked for, considering the rich, and free, and full promises of the gospel, even to "the chief of sinners" truly coming to Christ.

[2] "To all them that *obey* him: τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν." Our author has here gone a little *beyond* the letter of the text in insisting on faith alone.

on him, and this is all my preparation for this dreadful time.

S. I know no other preparation; and I trust that this preparation will carry us through whatever it shall please God to suffer us to meet with, in this dreadful time that is upon us.

" For some time both before and after this discourse, the plague violently increasing, their elder brother had been very pressing with them to leave the town, and shift all for themselves. But these two well-prepared souls seemed to receive that part of his proposals coldly, and began to look upon themselves as destined to stay, seeing their brother, by whose motions, as the head of the family, they had resolved from the first to be guided, had not talked of going away till it was almost impracticable to be done. They had made no provision, either for leaving the house and family in trust with any body, or for securing what in such cases might be, and

was fit to be secured: nor any country situation to retreat to. The elder brother, indeed, had a house of his own, and an estate with it, as far off as Cheshire; but it was not possible to carry any thing of goods or necessaries so far; especially after they had so neglected it to the last, till the ordinary carriers had ceased going for some time, and when there was no passing on the roads. The towns were all guarded, and the passages stopped. Even if they had procured certificates of health from the Lord Mayor, yet the city began to be so infected that no one would receive them; no inn would lodge them on the way. These things had made their removal so impracticable, that, as I said, the second brother and his sister concluded they were to stay.

"They were, as above described, come to a happy and steady calm of mind with respect to the danger of death—going together twice every day, besides their private retirements, to commit their souls in

a more solemn manner into the hands of God. Hitherto the infection had been kept not only out of their house but out of their neighbourhood: no one had died or been infected, that they had heard of, in that part of the street where they lived: but, as it was now the latter end of July, the city seemed like a place invested and besieged; for, though the plague was not so violent within the walls as without, yet it was more or less in most parts of the city.

"For some time past the dead had ceased to be buried in the usual form; and in the out-parts the dead carts were appointed to go through the streets between the hours of twelve and three in the night. —It was not until the first week in August, that the dreadful sound, 'Bring out your dead,' was heard within the city; and at first it was principally in those parishes which were next the walls, on the side of Cripplegate and Bishopgate; and that week there died of all diseases above 4000.

"Their elder brother, came in the week

before this, in a very great concern, having been at the Customhouse or that way, where he had some warehouses of goods, and having met with some frightful things in his way. Finding his brother and sister together, he broke out in a tone rather of horror than anger.

1*st*. *B*. Well, brother, said he, my sister and you may do what you please, but I can stand it no longer.

2*d*. *B*. My sister and I too are willing to do whatever you direct, brother; but it has been left among us as a thing undetermined so long, that I do not see what can be done now.

S. There may be as much danger, brother, in going as in staying; for I believe you have not yet resolved whither to go.

1*st*. *B*. It is true I have not: I have done by my family as I have done by my soul; let it lie without any concern about it till it is too late.

S. I beseech you do not say so: your

family, indeed, may find it too late to stir, but, blessed be the Lord, your soul is in better hands.

1*st*. *B*. I scarce know what hands I am in; I am at my wits' ends; I will take my horse and go to Cheshire.

S. That is giving us your order to stay where we are; for you know we cannot travel so far, as circumstances now stand, unless we should resolve to lie in the fields and starve; for no one would take us in.

1*st B*. Why not? you may have certificates of health from my Lord Mayor.

2*d*. *B*. You have seen accounts, brother, of several families who have been put to all manner of distresses upon the roads, on this very account; and some have come back again to London, choosing to meet the worst in their own houses, rather than wander in the fields and roads, when no one will admit them, or come near them, or let them pass from place to place.

1*st*. *B*. I know not what to do: I *must* go somewhere: I am not able to stay here:

my very blood runs cold in my veins at what I have met with to-day.

S. Why will you go out into the streets, brother?

1*st. B.* Nay, I do not think to go any more, till I go away for good and all.

2*d. B.* Hitherto, brother, we have been kept: who knows but it may please God to spare us? Let us keep within doors.

1*st. B.* How shall we get provisions? My mother's servant, that furnishes us now, said the last time he came he was frighted as he came through the Borough, and should be afraid to come much longer.

" While they were under these debates, which held them three or four days, there came a captain of a ship to the house, of whose ship the brothers were owners, and had fitted it out for a voyage to Genoa and Messina, where their chief dealing lay, and where they had lived. They were upon one of these discourses it seems, when this captain came into the counting-house for

some despatches which he wanted. Here he found his chief merchant under great perplexity about the progress of the plague; and began to tell him, that he wondered he had not removed his family before this time: upon which the following discourse began between those two only—for the second brother was gone up stairs with his sister.

Captain. Sir, I perceive you are in some perplexity about your family in this dreadful time.

Merchant. Indeed, captain, so I am: my brother and sister too, who are our governors, would have had me remove into the country two months ago; and I laughed at them, and slighted it: but now I must own I wish with all my heart I had done it.

C. I warrant you told them how you used to do abroad, where they make light of such things, they are so frequent.

M. So I did indeed: and I told my brother I thought he had known better, that had lived at Naples, where they say

there died 20,000 in one day; though, by the way, it was not true.

C. But pray, sir, why do you not go away still? This side of the city, and the Rotherhithe side of the river are pretty clear yet: you may all go away that way.

M. You mistake the case extremely, captain: we may go out of the town several ways still, but there is not a town upon the road that will suffer any body to pass that comes from London, or from any town near London; so that it is impossible to travel: we must even stay all and die here: I see no remedy.

The captain remaining silent, and seeming to muse on somewhat, the merchant proceeded: What makes you turn surprised at that, captain? it cannot be wondered at, nor can we blame the people; for who would venture to lodge a family from London? I mean what inn would venture it, and have the plague brought to them?

C. I was not surprised at that part at

all; indeed I was not thinking of it. I was at first surprised to think that you, sir, who had so much knowledge of these things, should not have made preparations for your family's retreat a great while ago, before the plague came: for you have had notice that it was coming on above these six months.

M. O captain! wonder no more: we have done by the family as we do by our souls—put off the apprehensions, and that puts off the preparations; and now the evil is upon us, we are all in confusion.

C. Well, but neither was that what I paused at: I have a proposal in my thoughts, that you may, if you please, with God's blessing, convey your family out of the city still, and that to such a distance that you may at least hope to be safe: and you shall meet with no stops upon the road at all, though you travel a great way.

M. We shall all be greatly obliged to you for such a proposal: nothing can be

more acceptable at a time of such extremity; for we look upon ourselves as all dead bodies.

C. I have but one question to ask by way of caution, and if that cannot be answered, I can do nothing.

M. I believe I can guess at your question: the nature of the thing guides to it: it is, Whether we have not the distemper already among us?

C. That is the question indeed, sir; for, if that could not be answered, you know nobody could expect to be assisted: neither could any body assist them; for they would carry death with them wherever they should go.

M. Well, you may be assured and depend upon it, that we are all of us, blessed be God! servants and all, as free from the infection, and from any distemper, at present, as ever we were in our lives.

C. Why then, sir, the short of the story is this: Have not I a ship here in the river? and is not she your own? except a

sixteenth, which I have by your friendship, and a sixteenth of my brother's, who will consent to whatever shall be for your service. Here we have victuals for her, for four months, for twenty-two men; and have put her up on the Exchange for Genoa, Naples, and Messina; but we have taken in no goods, but some hogsheads of sugar for your own account, and about fifty fodder of lead, for ballast, also of your own: nor, as things are now, will any body ship any thing; for all trade is at a stand. Besides it is to no purpose to go to sea, for no nation in Europe will give us product, or let us so much as come to an anchor in any of their ports.

M. You put a new thought into my head, I confess. Why, captain, would you take us on board?

C. *Will* I take you on board? Is she not your own ship? is she not fitted out at your expense? You may and have a right to command her, and turn me a-shore, if you think fit.

M. Well; but are you willing to take us in?

C. How can you ask that question, sir? why else do I make the proposal?

M. Where does your ship lie now?

C. She did lie, sir, at Rotherhithe, in what they call Cherry-garden Hole; but you know you ordered me to fall down to Deptford; and there we ride, ready to fall down lower, if we see occasion.

M. And have you room for us all?

C. Sir, we will make room for you, as convenient as if it were in your own house.

M. Sit down again, captain: come, I will propose it to my brother and sister, and hear what they say to it; for I confess your offer comes to me as if it came from heaven. It is as if it was a voice from above, a message to save us all from the most dreadful condition that ever family was in. I wonder I should never have thought of it before."

The account goes on to relate the pro-

posal of the measure to the younger brother and the sister, who both regarded it as "something like a call from heaven to them to come out of the danger;" and, viewing it in that light, "received it with suitable acknowledgments, and closed willingly with the offer."

Accordingly, under the direction of the elder brother, and by the active exertions of the captain, every requisite preparation for the embarkation was quickly made, and the ship's boat "ordered to come up to Tower Wharf for the family on the Wednesday:" when lo! on the Sunday afternoon the sister was suddenly taken ill. No doubt was entertained that she was seized with the plague. Under these trying circumstances "she carried it with an extraordinary composure of mind, meekly committing herself into the hands of Him on whose mercy she had so long depended; and strikingly shewing the difference between a mind solemnly prepared for death, and which in earnest had long expected it;

and a thoughtless negligent one, which had *put far away the evil day.*" But the condition of the elder brother was widely different. "Now indeed he was thoroughly distressed. Before he was frighted at the danger to which he was exposed: but now he looked upon it that God had struck his family, and that they should all die of the plague, and that very quickly. He got no sleep that night. Between twelve and one o'clock, he heard for the first time that dismal cry, 'Bring out your dead! bring out your dead!' the cart beginning to go through the street where he lived that very night. The noise of the bell, the doleful cry of the bellman, and the rumbling of the cart wheels, you may suppose, joined together to present to his mind the most frightful images; the terror of which was increased by the apprehension that the plague was already in his house, and that his own sister might perhaps be to be fetched out by the cart and the bearers, the next night or two at furthest. He got up and went to his brother's cham-

ber, thinking to awaken him, and to sit down by his bedside. But he was surprised to find no body in the room, and that the bed was not unmade. In short, his brother was up praying with his sister; and, though he believed she had the plague upon her, yet he would not leave her or stir from her, but as necessity obliged him; but sat by her, comforting and supporting her mind, with the fruit of their former experiences, and reading consoling scriptures to her. Thus they were spending the night, when, the elder brother calling the younger by name, the servant that attended told him, and he went out to him; and their short and confused discourse was to this purpose.

1*st. B.* O brother! we are all dead corpses! There is a cart gone by that must fetch us all away.

2*nd. B.* What, is the dead cart come into our lane?

1*st. B.* Ay, ay, I heard the bell-man's dismal cry.

2*nd*. *B*. Well, God's will be done with us! let us settle our minds on him: *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

1*st*. *B*. How can you go into my sister's chamber? you will get the distemper, to be sure. Nay, have you not got it already?

2*nd*. *B*. I cannot tell how I may fare as to that; it shall be as God pleases: but I will not leave her, while she has life and sense in her: she has been my soul's comforter, and I will never cease comforting her, as long as I am able.

1*st*. *B*. Why you are strangely altered and comforted indeed, compared to what you were when you came into the Counting-house to me, and were for running away to France.

2*nd*. *B*. Blessed be God, I am altered: and blessed be that dear messenger of God that is now languishing, and just entering joyfully into heaven! She has been a thousand times dearer than a sister to me; she

has been an angel of God to me. Oh that I were in her condition, as to the soul, though I were in her condition as to the infection also! As to the last, that is the particular hand of God, and it is our duty to submit: blessed be God it is no token of his displeasure!

1*st*. *B*. How! brother, is it no mark of God's displeasure? I think it is a sore and heavy judgment, and a token of God's vengeance upon the land.

2*nd*. *B*. It is a national judgment, no doubt, and calls for national humiliation; but I do not think it must be called a token of God's vindictive hand to any particular person; for then no body that had the distemper, could have any hope of being at peace with God: and there is our dear sister, bad as she is, she has a triumphant joy possessing her whole soul, in the blessed assurance of her salvation.[1]

[1] "It was generally observed among us, that God's people, who died by the plague among the rest, died with such peace and comfort as Christians do not ordinarily arrive unto, except when they are called forth to suffer martyrdom for the testi-

1*st. B.* I am glad to hear it: but I am very apt to question those who boast of their assurances of heaven: I think they very often prove hypocrites.[1]

mony of Jesus Christ. Some who have been full of doubts and fears, and complaints, whilst they have lived and been well, have been filled with assurance, and comfort, and praise, and joyful expectation of glory, when they have lain on their death-beds by this disease. And not only more grown Christians, who have been more ripe for glory, have had these comforts, but also some younger Christians, whose acquaintance with the Lord had been of no long standing." *Vincent; God's Terrible Voice in the City*, p. 37.

[1] The common class of mere nominal Christians very naturally form such an opinion. They can conceive little or nothing of the grounds—of any reasonable grounds—why one professed Christian, more than another of good and respectable character, should entertain such an assurance. They conceive that it must be taken up on some enthusiastic and inexplicable assumption. But it is by no means so. The reasonableness of the thing may be perfectly well demonstrated. All indeed proceeds upon the sole basis of Scripture: nothing can be known concerning salvation in general, much less concerning our own salvation, but from that source. But, admitting the infallible truth of the Scriptures, we ask, Is any thing more obvious than that they describe, minutely and particularly, various things pertaining to the character and state of mind, which mark out them that are in the way to heaven—" them that shall be the heirs of salvation?" I refer to all the descriptions of repentance, of the exercise of faith in Christ, of " the new heart and the right spirit," of the love of God and the " love to the brethren," which mark out them that " have passed from death

2*d*. *B*. She is too near heaven to be a counterfeit, brother. Besides she is the humblest, most melted penitent that ever you heard of: the sense of God's pardoning mercy has melted her very soul into penitential tears, and those tears have filled her with joy.

1*st*. *B*. You talk upon contraries: you are all mysterious.

2*d*. *B*. You may call it mysterious, if

unto life;" of the Christian temper, and conduct, and principles; of the "fruits of the Spirit," which distinguish "them that are Christ's." Now is it not perfectly intelligible that a person seriously-minded, bending his chief attention to these momentous subjects, may discern that, through the grace of God, he is brought, notwithstanding all remaining imperfections, to possess this state of mind, to exercise these Christian graces, and to bear this character? And may he not hence, with the most perfect fairness and reasonableness infer, on Scriptural grounds, that "God hath not appointed him unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ?" Thus the Spirit of God "bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God:" and, in proportion as that Divine Agent shines with his glorious light upon his own work in the soul, all doubt vanishes, and the happy subject of it is "filled with all joy and peace in believing." This indeed is "the secret of the Lord, known (only) to them that fear him:" (Ps. xxv. 14:) but it is no unintelligible, or inexplicable, or unreasonable fancy: it is no unfounded presumption.

you will, but it is a blessed truth, though it is a mysterious thing to those that understand it not: no repentance, no humility, no tears like those that are raised by a humble sense of infinite, undeserved, forgiving grace: and no joy, no satisfaction of soul, no rejoicing, nay, triumph of soul, like the joy that is founded in sorrow, founded in repentance. (Ezek. xvi. 63.)

1*st*. *B*. And is my sister come to that length? These are sublime things indeed.—O brother, what have I been doing? I am undone: what shall I do?

2*d*. *B*. I see, brother, it has pleased God to visit the family: I hope you will be preserved; I beg of you to take boat, and go immediately on board the ship. Take such servants as you think fit, and your little children, and go away; for you will but finish the ruin of the family if you stay: for if you should be struck they are all undone.

1*st*. *B*. I cannot go without you, brother: if you will go with me I will go.

2*d*. *B*. Do not ask me: I cannot leave her: no, I will live and die with her. I am sure, if I had been the first, she would not have left me. Besides, brother, it may not be safe for you to have me go, for to be sure I have the seeds of the distemper about me by this time.

"He had with much ado prevailed on his brother, to resolve upon going the next morning, and not to stay for the ship's boat, which was to come for them two days after; when, offering to go into his sister's chamber again, the servant met him softly at the door, and told him she was fallen into a sleep, with a little perspiration upon her. On this he retired into his own chamber. He waited four or five hours, and still his sister slept most sweetly: upon which he lay down on his own bed in his clothes, and slept several hours more, and still his sister had not awaked. In a word, she slept till near nine o'clock the next morning, when she awoke wonderfully refreshed; her distemper quite abated, the fever gone;

and, in a word, it appeared, to the inexpressible joy of the whole family, that she had not the least symptoms of the infection upon her.

" On the day appointed the boat therefore came up, and the eldest brother, with his two children and one maid-servant, and a man-servant, went on foot through the street to Galley-Quay, where, it being high water, the boat came close to the shore, and they all went away.

" The next day, the boat being ordered up again, the second brother, the sister, and another maid-servant, with an ancient woman that was formerly the sister's nurse, all went off in the same manner.

" When they were all safe on board, the captain asked their leave to bring his own wife and one child, a little boy of five years old, and a maid, to be with him also; which they all willingly agreed to: and thus they were all embarked together. This was the first week in August, by which time the burials in the city and suburbs amounted to

no less than 4,030 in all, of which 2,817 were of the plague.

" They left the house fastened up with no soul in it; but committed the care of guarding it to the ordinary watch by night, and to two poor men, who by turns kept the outer door, by day, took in letters, and any such business as, in that time of a cessation of all business, might happen. They were particularly directed to take in the weekly bills of mortality, which with all foreign letters were ordered to be sent weekly to a house at Greenwich, and to be thence brought to the ship's side, after they had been perfumed and sprinkled with vinegar, and then scorched at the fire, as was the usage.

" The ship, which was large and commodious, lay at anchor a little above Deptford; where they continued about a fortnight longer: but, finding by that time the dreadful increase of the plague, and that it came fast to the eastward, and began to rage in Wapping and Ratcliffe, and even

down to Blackwall; and that some had died of it at Rotherhithe and Deptford; the captain, at the request of his company, weighed, and fell down the river to a place between Blackwall and Woolwich, called Bugsby's Hole, a secure station for ships to ride in. They soon found reason also to alter the place appointed for their letters, and ordered them to Woolwich—both the towns of Deptford and Greenwich being sorely visited.

"In this station they rode with great satisfaction all the rest of the month of August; till they received the last weekly bill for that month, which amounted to no less than 7,496—an increase of 2000 upon that of the preceding week; when the elder brother became altogether as uneasy as he was before he left his house in London. On this they weighed, and went down the river to Greenhithe. Thence they proposed to go down as low as Gravesend; when they received news that the plague was at that place, and, as it was said, (though

prematurely,) at Chatham and Rochester. They continued therefore somewhat longer at Greenhithe; till the elder brother being still uneasy, and not bearing to lie at any place when the plague was yet beyond him —or lower down the river—made the captain remove past Gravesend to an anchorage at a place since called New Tavern—being as far as the customhouse officers would let him pass without clearing."

Finding however that they were too much exposed in this situation to be safe with the small number of hands they had on board to manage the ship, (being only "the chief-mate, boatswain, carpenter, and six seamen," beside the captain,) "they agreed at last to come up the river again to the upper part of Long Reach—three miles nearer London than Greenhithe. Here lay six other vessels, four above them and two below them: which they found were all outward-bound, but without their full lading, being embargoed, as it were, by the common calamity. All the captains had

their families on board, and most of them other families, who thus sought, like the subjects of our narrative, safety from the plague; and through God's mercy, had hitherto found it. Our party had not been here above three days, when the headmost ship, or that which lay at the upper end of the Reach, made a signal to the rest, which they answered, but the new comers did not understand. The headmost ship's boat however soon came along side, with the ship's mate on board, and having hailed the captain said, he was ordered to acquaint him, that the next day was that which the six ships, ever since they had ridden there in company, had agreed to keep as a weekly fast, in order to beg of Almighty God to preserve them from the pestilence; and that they would be glad if he and his company would please to join them in it. This proposal was thankfully acceded to, and the day regularly observed, on its weekly return, as a day of strict religious fasting and humiliation. As however they had no

minister on board, they made it an act of private and, as we may call it, family devotion only. The younger brother and his sister spent much of the time together in joint religious exercises, as they had done on their usual fasts: but "the elder brother was still so confused in his thoughts, and had such a reserved melancholy upon him all the time, that he could do little more than read a sermon or two to the family, and then retired to his private cabin, where he spent his time as well as he could; though, as he afterwards acknowledged, very uncomfortably to himself.

"About three days after this, which was September 6, they received the weekly bill of mortality, reporting 8,252 deaths from August 29 to September 5, whereof 7,145 were of the plague and spotted fever. This filled them all with heaviness; and put the elder brother upon new projects: especially as the numbers were nearly as high the two following weeks. However on the 29th of

September they were surprised early in the morning by hearing the headmost ship fire five guns; and, looking out, they saw she had her ancient and pendants flying, and all bore the face of joy. They began to call upon one another with their speaking trumpets, to enquire the cause: when, presently a boat proceeded from the head ship, and, calling to every one of the others as she passed, informed them that her captain had received the last weekly bill and two letters, which announced that the plague had abated in an extraordinary manner, the number having fallen by 2,000 that week! This was matter of joy sufficient to them all: and accordingly they all fired their guns, gave thanks to God, and drank to one another's health as well as they could at that distance; (for they never ventured on board each others' ships;) and, in hopes that the distemper would continue to abate, laid aside the scheme they had begun to entertain, of sailing away together, and forcing a landing in Ireland, or some other

uninfected part. Nor did their hopes deceive them," as will appear from comparing the account already given in the former part of this volume.

However they continued strictly on their guard till the end of November. In the course of that month, the face of things being so essentially changed, they came up to "what they now call Limehouse Reach, a little above Deptford." Thence they sent their servants to town to prepare their house for their reception; and, "after almost four months' absence, all things being ready within doors, and the whole parish of St. Margaret Pattens, in which their house stood, having been several weeks free from the plague," they returned through God's blessing upon the measure they had been led to adopt, in health and safety to their habitation.

Our author concludes his work with remarking again on the wide difference between a prepared and an unprepared mind, under such solemn circumstances, as exem-

plified in the sister and the younger brother, on the one part, and in the elder brother on the other part: and imploring that all his readers may experience the blessedness that arises from a heart "standing fast, trusting in the Lord."

Before I dismiss the volume from my hands, I must beg leave not only to press the lesson just alluded to, but to make a few remarks on the contents, generally, of the second part of the work.

Alas! how many are acting habitually, with reference to repentance and preparation for eternity, the same infatuated part which the elder brother is here described as acting. They cannot indeed flatter themselves concerning death, as he did concerning the plague, that it will not come: but they hope that it is distant, and they are determined to put off the thoughts of it, and all effectual preparation for it to a future time (a time which probably will never arrive,) of greater leisure and less dis-

inclination to the duty. They resolve to look only (as he did,) to what they vainly think the *safe* alternative—that of continued life and opportunity: whereas the opposite alternative is very possibly the more likely one, even upon the ordinary calculation of life alone—without taking into account the danger of provoking a long-suffering but offended God to pronounce, "*Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee:* thy expected opportunities, on the anticipation of which thou goest on to trifle alike with my justice and my mercy, and to add sin to sin, shall never be vouchsafed thee!" Or, even supposing abused opportunities not to be withdrawn—supposing life and mental powers and religious advantages to be continued—where is the probability that disinclination to forsake *all* sin will decrease, by longer continuance in sin? that disposition to turn to God, and confidence to resort to him, will grow up amid renewed and prolonged rebellion against him? Oh! it is a forlorn hope—a perilous risk—a miserable

course: miserable, at present—to continue in "the bondage of corruption"—under "the wrath of God"—the reproaches of conscience—and the terrors of judgment to come. It is miserable at present, as well as infinitely perilous for the future. Some, blessed be God, are recovered from this sad state: but, alas! how many, who had flattered themselves with being rescued from it, never are so; but die as they had lived. They hope that the near prospect of death will work a salutary change in their minds: but of itself it will never do this. If it is ever made the means of it, it is through the gracious influence of "the good Spirit" of God. And what right has that man to flatter himself that this influence will be vouchsafed at last, to save him from the consequence of having "resisted" it during all his former and better days?

In this view the case of the elder brother is well and naturally depicted. The presence of the plague finds him not only

without resource and without comfort, but without that change of disposition, that heart to prepare, which he had flattered himself the danger, becoming imminent, would bring with it. And wisely and well is the thick veil of doubt left hanging over his character to the end. Had his conversion, distinct though late, been described, it might better have soothed our feelings, but it would have weakened the salutary impression made upon our hearts; and even deprived us, to a great degree, of the very weighty and important lesson, which it is the will of God that such cases should commonly afford us.

Thus many love to persuade themselves that the young ruler, who "went away sorrowful," indeed, but yet actually went away from our Lord, from love of his riches, afterwards repented and returned to him. It might be so: but it is not in the record: we know nothing of it, if he did: and the case is unspeakably more instructive, and more suited to warn and to profit

us, than if such an addition had been made to the narrative. Now he stands to us a solemn monitor, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*

May many of my readers, specially of those younger readers, who I hope will be attracted by the affecting narratives and interesting conversations of this little volume, be warned by the sad case of the elder brother. "His passions," we are told, not his piety, were agitated when the hour came upon him; he was in a continual hurry of mind, and terrible alarm, even to amazement: he thought himself secure no where; made all the restraints in the ship more severe than was reasonable; and, when he read the bills of mortality, would tremble, and fall into such agonies as can hardly be described." Oh, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear God's voice; "seek him while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. *They that seek him early shall find him.*"

What an encouraging and beautiful ex-

ample of this, in the next place, is presented to us in the case of the sister in this family. In her we see every thing Christian and feminine, and yet truly heroic. What a blessing does she prove to her younger brother! And what a blessing is such a young woman suited to prove among all who have

> "Grown up with her
> Round the same fireside!"

And, should she be spared to become a wife and a mother, what a blessing to her husband, and her children, even to future generations!

Nor are such examples merely imaginary. Blessed be God many such really exist, in all their leading rudiments, and only wanting the aid of circumstances to call them forth into similar activity. What traits of female character did 'the loss of the Kent' bring to light;[1] and one similar example,

[1] We can never forget the note written, signed, directed, and enclosed in a bottle, in the midst of this terrific scene, and afterwards taken up in the West Indies: "The ship Kent,

at least, was presented on board 'the Rothsay Castle,' though no other words of her's are preserved than the sentence,' While there is danger, I like to *face* it.'[2] And in more calm and ordinary cases of trial, the same graces are developed, when the character is really formed on the basis of Christian principle.—Let me be permitted to allude to a death-bed which I have recently visited, that of a dear friend, not, indeed, so youthful as 'the sister' in this narrative is described to be, but yet one in *comparatively* early life—the mother of a young family—a circumstance of all others suited to produce anxiety in such a situation. Yet here the blessed effects of "a prepared mind" were most delightfully exhibited. During a long illness, her case only illustrated the sentence of the prophet, "Thou

Indiaman, is on fire: E. J. and myself commit our spirits into the hands of our blessed Redeemer; His grace enables us to be composed in the awful prospect of entering into eternity. J W. R. M'Gregor, 15th March, 1825; Bay of Biscay."

[2] Rev. J. H. Stewart's Letters, &c., on the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Forster.

shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." When I visited her for the last time, her language was, "The time of my illness has been *a happy time* to me;" and when she allowed herself to look back on the past, and forward to "the glory to be revealed," and her thoughts to dwell on the promises of the gospel, she seemed overcome with the sense of the goodness that was enjoyed, and that was *reserved* for her. To the last moment her language to those around her was, "While I live, continue to pray for me; and as soon as you think I am safe-landed, then, O praise God for me!"—To one who alluded to the ground of anxiety above mentioned, and to her being, as she was, relieved from it, she said, "We cannot *anticipate* this; we must not expect it before the time comes; but, when it comes, then the relief will be vouchsafed." Such is the blessedness of "a prepared mind"—and especially of "serving the Lord from our youth." O

may my youthful readers, especially, be moved to aspire after it, and to seek it in the way marked out to them.

And then the case of the younger brother is not less affecting and instructive.

We need not dwell on the warning which all his discouragements and despondings, arising from the consciousness of having declined from the right way after seeming to betake himself to it, furnish against departing from God, suffering our impressions to wear away, our convictions to be stifled, our resolutions to remain unfulfilled. But I would, for a moment, insist upon the *instruction* and *encouragement* afforded by the happy result of the endeavours, in which, however for a time disconsolate, yet (prompted by the zeal and piety of his devoted sister,) he persevered, to return unto God. This admonishes all persons never to yield to despondency, never to think it is now "too late," never to distrust "infinite mercy," exercised to us

through the all-sufficient sacrifice and merits of our Divine Redeemer. This whole case is, I am persuaded, most truly and scripturally pourtrayed; and it has, blessed be God! many prototypes in real life. May their number be greatly multiplied! The word of God speaks nothing but what is inviting and encouraging to every sinner, let the aggravations of his transgressions have been what they may, from the moment he desires to forsake his sins, and turn unto the Lord. "Though he" should for a time "walk in darkness, and have no light," yet "let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." "The Lord will have mercy on him; our God will abundantly pardon" him. "The blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse him from all sin;" and he shall be enabled to say, "O Lord I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." To every such person we must cry, "O tarry thou the Lord's leisure:" wait earnestly *upon*

him—wait patiently *for* him; "be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Nor must we pass over in silence the venerable widowed mother of the family—though she too soon vanishes entirely from our view. Her conversation, while it lasts, is highly characteristic, acute, and forcible. Indeed, it is one excellence of these dialogues, that the characters are so well sustained. Each is distinctly marked, and preserves its consistency throughout. To the example and instructions of this excellent parent we naturally trace, under the divine blessing, all the good which grows up in her children.

Finally: It is not improbable that by many persons, in the present day, the whole of the preparation here recommended, and the course pursued by the two principal characters, will be pronounced much too

formal. And on this I would offer a few remarks.

Wherever the sentiments, or even the language, has appeared not duly evangelical, I have acknowledged the fault, and endeavoured to supply the due correction of it; though, when the whole is taken together, there seems to be but little real ground of complaint under this head.

That the parties concerned have no notion of resting in mere external observances, in a routine of duties, in an *opus operatum*, is most obvious. The heart is concerned, and the utmost earnestness cherished throughout; and "peace and joy in believing," and all other Christian tempers, and Christian duties, are the result: and, where this is the case, we should rather be disposed to suspect remissness and lukewarmness in ourselves, than to charge formality upon those whose devotions, though conducted in a different way from our own, are productive of such effects.

But in real truth I suspect that, while

some of our predecessors had too much degenerated into formality, we have gone, to our hurt and to the dishonour of religion, into the opposite extreme. We have departed so widely from the *form* and *order* of religion, as to be in danger of losing much of the spirit of it, which is hardly to be preserved without them. There is important truth in the maxim, that what is left to *any* time is apt to be neglected at *all* times. And is not such the case with the private devotions of many? Set times, and set places are good as the basis of general rules, though, as in the case of all general rules, the deviation from them, at some times, may be proper and advantageous. The observance of special occasions, some of them periodically recurring, is not to be relinquished without our suffering loss from the neglect. The dispensing, altogether, with fast days, and times of peculiar humiliation; the neglect of the seasons set apart by the church for such purposes; has robbed us, it is to be feared, of many spi-

ritual enjoyments, and of victories over the world, the flesh, and the devil, which our pious forefathers obtained, in the due improvement of such occasions. With respect even to forms and methods of devotion: *private* religious exercises should, certainly, not be *confined* to them; our own wants, and sins, and sorrows, and mercies, and joys, and those of the individuals, or the collective bodies, with which we are connected, should be brought before the throne of the heavenly grace as they arise: and no man can have duly given expression to them for us in a pre-composed form. Yet the feelings of the mind vary; the spirits are often dull, the thoughts distracted, the whole soul sluggish and torpid; and thus the season of devotion is passed over more unprofitably than, perhaps, it might be, would we condescend, in such circumstances, to call in *the aid* of some course of devotion—not to stand substitute for the emotions of our own hearts, but to call forth those emotions; to cherish and

assist them. " While we were thus musing," perhaps, " the fire would burn"—where nothing but lifeless embers are now at times found.

Through discarding all *methods* and *courses* of devotion, are not some important topics even habitually passed over, or very scantily and perfunctorily attended to?

And so, also, we may, perhaps, properly remark concerning that example of *united* devotion, in what may still be called rather the private, than the social worship, of near friends, which is exemplified in the case before us. Were our hearts, in common, more engaged upon the things which pertain to our souls' welfare, this, I believe, would be more practised. Were times of calamity, such as are described in this book, to revisit us, I doubt not that they would drive us more to such exercises. And, in the devout performance of them, should we not find that fulfilled, which our Lord has promised? " I say unto you, that, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching

any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xviii. 19.

There is one other point on which, before we close, the reader may wish to be further assisted in forming an opinion. I refer to the question, how far the work before us records *facts*, or how far it consists of *fiction?* When, in addition to the contents of the volume itself, he shall have perused the following sentences from the Author's preface, he will have before him all the means of judging as to this question, which I myself possess.

"To make this discourse familiar and agreeable to every reader, I have endeavoured to make it as historical as I could; and have, therefore, intermingled it with some accounts of facts, where I could come at them, and some by report, suited to and calculated for the moral; endeavouring, by all possible and just methods, to

encourage the great work of preparation, which is the main end of this undertaking. The cases I have stated here are suited, with the utmost care, to the circumstances past, and more especially as they are reasonably supposed to suit those to come; and, as I very particularly remember the last visitation of this kind, which afflicted this nation in 1665, and have had occasion to converse with many other persons who lived in this city all the while; I have chosen some of their cases as precedents for our present instructions. I take leave so far to personate the particular people in their histories, as is needful to the case in hand, without making use of their names; though, in many cases, I could have descended to the very names and particulars of the persons themselves. But it is the example that is the thing aimed at.—As to the religious history here mentioned: till I see some just exception raised against the pattern laid before us in every part of it, I cannot suggest there will be any against the

manner of relating it, and, for that reason, I make no apology for it."

My opinion then is, 1st. That the historical details concerning the plague are strictly accurate, according to the best information that could be obtained. 2nd. That with respect to the account of the two families, who are made the vehicles of the information, and occupy the foreground in the respective pieces, the Author had known cases to a great degree corresponding with his narration. Perhaps he has combined, in the story of each, incidents which belonged to more families than one: yet I have little doubt that, according to his own statement, he could, in most cases, "have descended to names" and places. Lastly, with regard to the conversations: Many substantially agreeing with those here given would, under such circumstances, unquestionably occur. The Author had, very probably, known such, and partaken in them; and in thus detailing them, and putting them into the mouths of suitable

speakers, he has only followed the model of many of the most admired pieces, both ancient and modern. Truth and fact are at the basis: fiction supplies little more than the decorations of the column.

*** I here subjoin extracts from a letter, dated at St. Petersburg, June 22, (O. S.) 1831, during the prevalence of the cholera. It has appeared in several publications, and is, I understand, fully to be relied on. I apprehend *it*, likewise, proceeds from the pen of a female.

My dear ——,—The newspapers will have told you that our city is at length visited with the pestilential sword; would that I could say we were bowing in humility and contrition of spirit, and were asking, Wherefore is this chastisement? We have sinned and forgotten our God, therefore he visits us with his plagues to teach us that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Many are for accounting for its appearance by natural causes, and others attribute it to fatality; yet there are a few who hear the loud call in this judgment to consider our ways. Yes, my beloved, if there ever was a time in which we were more especially called upon to watch, and leave the morrow, it is the present. When I go to bed at night, I desire to be thankful we have been permitted to lie down peacefully; if I wake in the night, I rejoice to see our span still extended; and when we assemble in the morning, I think,—Shall we still be preserved, or will one or more have exchanged time for eternity ere the shades of evening close around us? Nothing feels of so much importance as to have a well-grounded hope of being inscribed in the Lamb's book of life. Though I do ask the Lord to spare our lives, that they may be devoted to his service and glory, yet I desire his will, and his will alone, to be our portion. The appearance of this sickness altered all our plans..... Our family consists of forty-two individuals, so that, in all human probability, some or other will be subject to the disease. The men occasionally go out, and if they remain longer than usual, I begin to fear their having fallen down sick. We close the house from communi-

cation with others as much as possible, and every member of the family who has occasion to go out, and every visitor, has to undergo a ten minutes' fumigation ere they enter the house. Should I not be spared to write to you again, let me tell you I consider it a precious privilege to be here at this season, to sympathise and pray with my friends, to rejoice or weep with them, and watch over my dear children. Some christian families, who had gone into the country for the benefit of pure air, have now all collected together in the city, and rejoice to be near one another for life or for death; while worldly families are flying on all sides, striving to carry themselves beyond the present range of the disease. We meet together for worship and for indispensable business, but for nothing else; and each of us is endeavouring to have his or her worldly affairs in order, lest the summons should come in a moment. .... How solemn is eternity, when we feel on the brink of it! How precious then does the immortal soul feel! What a favour to be here! I desire to rest in the Lord, and if he prolongs my life, I only wish it may be for his service; nothing else is worth living for. Oh, how contemptible does every occupation appear, which is not sanctified by prayer and love to the Lord. My dear friends and I meet each time as though it were for the last time, and part deeply impressed with the uncertainty of seeing each other again in time. This feeling of uncertainty is useful to us all. .... Be not anxious about us; nothing can happen to us contrary to the will of our heavenly Father, who is full of compassion and tender love. Therefore leave us in his hands, and be peaceful; but, my dear ——, pray much for the poor and the ignorant, and that the glory of the Lord may fill all the earth. O, that we were bowing at the foot of the cross, all in a body, as the Ninevites did; who knows but the Lord would sheath his sword, and send us salvation? .... In the 121st Psalm, the Lord promises to preserve the souls of those who look up to him. The body is only the garment of the soul; therefore, let us leave it to seek for the preservation of that which is to remain for ever.

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